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Mardi 25 mars 2014

Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller



Président L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to put a few thoughts on the record on this bill. I just want to say at the outset, I'll only be speaking for a minute or two, and sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant of the Minister of Finance, who introduced this bill, the member from Vaughan.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is very simple; it's very straightforward. As part of our government's commitment to responsible fiscal management, this bill would extend the pay freeze for all MPPs until after the budget is balanced in 2017-18. I'm suspecting, I'm hoping, that we will have a very quick debate and quick passage of this bill. I suspect every member of the Legislature is in support of what's behind it.

I think we all understand that, like governments around the world, we have just gone through a very, very serious recession. All of us are facing tremendous fiscal pressure. I can speak as Minister of Government Services, who oversees the negotiations that go on with our many labour partners, that over the last few years, and certainly going forward, as we sit down at the table we are going to ask them in the negotiations that they recognize that they're taking place in a context of restraint. It's simply a time when all of us have to do more with less. when all of us have to recognize the fiscal realities. I think every member of this Legislature knows that it's hard for us to ask our partners who are employed by either the government or the broader public service, to ask our partners who receive funding from the government-which has been restrained and may be restrained going forward—we can't ask them to make those sacrifices without leading by example.

All it is, is us leading by example by stating that our pay will remain frozen until the budget is balanced several years from now. Mr. Speaker, it's a very, very straightforward bill. If you saw it physically, it's just a few lines, but I think it speaks volumes about leading by example.

I look forward to hearing the comments by my colleague the member from Vaughan, but I do hope, and I do call on all members—let's have a quick debate on this and let's move forward with this piece of legislation, which I imagine will garner unanimous support here in the Legislature. With that, I'd like to yield the floor to my colleague the member from Vaughan, who is sharing my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking my colleague the government House leader for his opening remarks in the discussion and the debate this morning. I want to begin by echoing some of the comments that the minister made with respect to this particular bill, Bill 177, otherwise known as the MPP Salary Freeze Act. This is a relatively straightforward undertaking on the part of our government, as the government House leader mentioned a second ago. This is simply a move to demonstrate that we continue to lead by example for the people of Ontario, who, generally speaking, have been wrestling over the last couple of years-working with our government to make sure that we bring the government of Ontario's budget back into balance, something that we've been working very hard on, but working very hard on it in a balanced and reasonable and responsible way. This particular bill, Bill 177, is simply a measure designed to demonstrate that those who have the privilege of serving as members of provincial Parliament take the opportunity to demonstrate the leadership that's important to the people that we represent and that the compensation for MPPs continue to be frozen until the province's budget is balanced, as the government House leader mentioned, in 2017-18.

I've said this many times in the past when we've discussed other somewhat similar or analogous legislation, that this is yet one more undertaking on the part of our government to demonstrate a fairly significant degree of leadership around bringing transparency and openness not only to the government's finances but generally with respect to how we govern the province. Many who are watching at home today or are in the galleries or in the House serving as members will know that, shortly after the 2003 election, this Ontario government decided to

proceed with creating legislation that would no longer make it possible for any future government in the province to go into an election campaign without having the books of the province open and exposed to the people for scrutiny, because of what had taken place prior to the 2003 campaign. There have been many moves undertaken by our government over the last decade or so to make sure that we are administering or producing that kind of balance and responsibility with respect to restraint, and making sure that we keep the government's fiscal House in good shape.

There have been some extenuating circumstances. Everyone, of course, will be aware of the worldwide economic, let's call it "crisis," that engulfed the globe back in 2008, something that governments of every stripe and every jurisdiction around the world wrestled with aggressively to ensure that a standard of living was maintained in their respective jurisdictions. Here in Ontario, our government—not always, but often in combination or in concert with the federal government—made decisions to invest significantly to keep the economy growing, to keep people employed and to provide stimulus with respect to the economy. Those measures obviously required a significant amount of deficit spending. We're now in a position, and have been since 2008-09, of gradually, slowly but surely reducing the deficit. As the government House leader mentioned, we are on track to balance the province's books by 2017-18.

What we're doing with this particular piece of legislation is to make sure that the people of Ontario, of whom we are asking a lot with respect to restraint not only in the public sector and in the public service but across the board, understand that the 107 women and men who represent them here in this chamber are walking in lock-step with them when it comes to restraint and when it comes to demonstrating that we have a balanced and responsible and reasonable approach to making sure that the government's books are balanced, and to make sure at the same time that we are not doing anything to threaten our economic recovery.

Now, I know that there will be discussion and debate coming from members of opposition caucuses, both the official opposition and of course the NDP caucus, the third party's caucus, and that's the way it should be. Certainly, over the last number of weeks—frankly for the 18 or 19 months that I've served here as the MPP for Vaughan—these kinds of bills and discussions have often descended into opportunities for opposition members to go off on significant tangents. While I respect the right that they have, the privilege they have, to represent their communities and to add their voice to the debate and discussion that takes place in this House, I would sincerely ask members on the opposition benches to provide us with constructive discussion today around what is actually being asked for in this bill, which is simply an extension of the MPP salary or compensation freeze that has been in place for a little while, and that we believe, on this side, should continue to be in place until the government's books are balanced, as I mentioned. I would sincerely hope, as the government House leader said just a few moments ago in leading off the debate this morning, that opposition members would resist the temptation to try and turn this into something that it's not, and that they would resist the temptation—try not to grand-stand on this issue.

0910

As the government House leader mentioned, it is a very straightforward bill. It is very straightforward legislation. It is simply trying to sincerely demonstrate that the 107 women and men who serve in this particular chamber, who have that—we all have that responsibility—take that responsibility seriously and demonstrate that we are going to move forward with continuing this freeze.

We've all had the opportunity, I'm sure, to have various conversations with the people that we have the privilege of representing in our respective communities; I certainly have. Just last night, for my riding of Vaughan, I was very proud and very happy to host a virtual town hall. It gave me the chance to hear, over the course of an hour last evening, from literally somewhere in the neighbourhood of 6,000 or 7,000 people who joined that virtual town hall from my community. Over the course of the hour, I had the chance to hear some very direct questions, questions that were all very pointed and from a very interested audience. I can tell you that, generally speaking, the notion that we're all in this together is something that's fundamental to the people out there who we have the chance to represent. Certainly, in the call in my virtual town hall meeting last night, and in other discussions I've had with people—not just families, but also business owners in my community—there is an understanding that as we continue to move, as I've said, in that balanced and responsible and fair way, back towards balancing the books over the next couple of years, again the target date being 2017-18, we will continue to work on this together. We are only here, in Bill 177, asking the 107 members of this Legislature to share in that restraint, which I think is a fairly straightforward request and I think something that's not only defendable, but something that's quite sensible and responsible, and it's the prudent and right thing to do.

Once again, I would strongly encourage the members opposite, as they join the debate today, to obviously do what they need to do to represent the views and the hopes and aspirations of their constituents, but at the same time I would ask that they understand what the larger picture is here. The larger picture is that this is a simple and straightforward measure that is simply asking us to work together, as I believe the people of our communities expect us to do, so that we can move forward and we can continue to extend the MPP salary freeze.

I sincerely do look forward to hearing what members opposite have to say with respect to this bill, but I would only point out once again that over the last decade we have consistently, on this side of the House, laid out a balanced and responsible path forward in all areas relating to the government's fiscal house but also all matters

relating to the economy. This is one more step in that direction.

I mentioned earlier the legislation we introduced back in 2004, I believe it was, regarding making sure that the province's books are held up to scrutiny before elections. We also made the decision to ban what previously had been fairly extensive partisan advertising that took place with taxpayers' dollars. There have been other measures that we've introduced in the past decade around various forms of restraint. This is part of that natural evolution; this is part of demonstrating that the people who have the opportunity to come here to Queen's Park to represent their communities, their neighbours, their friends, continue to show the leadership that the people of our respective communities expect.

With that, again, I look forward to the discussion and the debate around Bill 177. I don't personally believe this is the kind of legislation that warrants extensive, neverending, ongoing discussion and debate. Having said that, I do respect the rights that every member of this House has with respect to the comments they want to make, to whatever they would like to add to the discussion. I hope, again sincerely, that it will be high-level, that it will be constructive and that the discussion and debate today will be consistent with what the people of Vaughan—my community, and the people of all the communities that we represent—have in terms of the expectations that they have for the people who represent them.

With that, Speaker, I will take my seat by saying that I encourage everyone to support Bill 177, to get it moving forward so that we can continue to extend the MPP salary freeze.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments? The member for Pembroke-Nipissing—I've forgotten—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Proud to be here, but proud to be from there. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Vaughan on this bill. Of course we're going to support the legislation. I think we've indicated that from day one. But I think there is an opportunity to have some discussion about it, about how, perhaps, the government could have gone further. I mean, we have been advocating for some time about—if you really want to get the financial affairs of this province in order, you're not going to do it by freezing the salaries of 107 people. That's just not going to make a big enough difference, freezing them. There are 107 of us. We've got got hundreds of thousands of public servants. We have advocated for an across-the-board wage freeze for two years for everyone who is employed either indirectly or directly by the province of Ontario. That would have a \$2-billion impact, on an annual basis, on the budget of this province. That's significant.

I mean, this is largely symbolic. It is important for us to show that, as the legislators of this province, as the people who make the laws and the people who are supposed to lead, we're going to set an example. It is true, in fact, that the members of the Legislature have not had an increase in their wages since 2008. When this is extended to 2019, that will be 11 years without an increase. I wonder how many people out there in the public sector would agree to an 11-year salary freeze. We're in fact doing that, as members of this Legislature, to show that we are going to take this head on, this issue of the financial malaise that the current government has us in. We're going to take it head on.

But the government could have gone so much further. Don't just make an example of members of the Legislature. Show some real leadership. Take control of the governance of this province and have a legislated wage freeze across the board.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you for the opportunity to be able to respond to the member from Vaughan with respect to this bill on MPP wage freezes.

The member talked about the government wanting all of the MPPs and parties to share in the restraint, and that the government has had a balanced fiscal house. They've been working on a balanced fiscal house over the last six to 10 years. You know, some of that I found to be very interesting, because, in fact, when we go back and we look at cancelled gas plants where we've spent \$1 billion of taxpayers' money, it's hard for taxpayers to want to share in that restraint, when the government has spent the last at least three years that I've been here actually wasting taxpayers' money.

Our job in this process is to hold the government to account. We're elected here to represent our constituents. We are elected to come out and debate issues, and there is a legislative process in place that when bills are tabled and come for first reading, they generally get passed, but at second reading we have the opportunity to actually debate issues. I think that we're going to debate this issue. We want to see it move along to committee where we can really have a fulsome debate on this issue.

Families in this province are feeling the squeeze and companies in the province are feeling the squeeze—small business. I think it's too bad that the Liberals aren't focusing, in this short time that we're here between March and June, on capping CEO salaries, and actually going out and having a look at all of those big CEO pays and big VP pays in public sector areas that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to stand today in support of Bill 177. I think we all know that, as the member from Renfrew-Nipissing said, we need to lead by example. I also agree with the member for Welland that we do need to debate these things, but let's be realistic. This is simply an extension of a piece of legislation that freezes our wages. If we're going to lead by example, we need to do this

Another thing I'd like to point out in terms of leading by example: We have Bill 179, which was introduced yesterday, which is the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. There are a number of measures in there that will allow us to lead by example. I can see nods from members on the other side that they agree, and I look forward to that being debated.

Mr. Todd Smith: We like our examples better than

your examples, though.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, you know, we don't have a monopoly on good ideas, nor do others on the other side.

Again, to the member from Welland, whom I respect a great deal, we do need to debate these things, but it's fairly straightforward what we're talking about. We've debated this before. What we're talking about is an extension. It has to do with the 107 of us. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing is right: It's just 107. But if we're going to lead by example and lead the way, then we need to do this and we need to get this out of the way and dispense with it in a timely fashion. So if we all agree on this, let's not delay it, and that's what my concern is on this side.

I again appreciate the remarks from the member from Vaughan, the member from Welland and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing. There's no reason to delay this—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't forget Pembroke.

Mr. John Fraser: Pembroke, I'm sorry. My apologies, I'll withdraw that. Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—and we should lead by his example.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further

comments and questions.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To carry on with the leading by example, I'm happy to lead by example. We've been doing that since 2009. But I must remind everyone, particularly the minister who just introduced this piece of legislation, that we began sitting in this session mid-February. If this is a priority, if this was important to the Liberal government, I would suggest to you that you would have wanted to introduce it, debate it and vote on it before the end of March. The fact that we want to talk about leading by example—again, there's no issue with it. As MPPs we have a responsibility to focus on the Ontario economy, to focus on how to build business and job creators in Ontario. I would suggest to you that that has not been happening under this current Liberal government.

If you want to talk about leading by example, maybe we have to actually talk about which examples we're referring to. Are we referring to the examples where so much money was spent in the Ornge scandal? Are we talking about so much money that was wasted in eHealth? Are we talking about a cancellation of \$1.1 billion on two gas plants? Which leading by example would you like to talk about? Because while the MPP salary freeze is good in and of itself, it is by no means going to deal with the systemic problem that we have here in Ontario under the McGuinty-Wynne leadership that talks about spending far more money than we can ever imagine recouping through taxes.

What we're faced with is a budget, some time off in the distant future—perhaps May, perhaps never—where they will once again come to the taxpayers, come to the job creators and say, "We need more money." If you want to lead by example, let's talk about systemic issues and deal with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Vaughan has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank everyone who stood to comment or ask questions, though I don't think I actually heard any questions, except for the last speaker, the member from Dufferin-Caledon, when I was asked, I guess, which "leadership by example" I was requesting. The leadership by example that's germane to the actual bill we're discussing today, just in case that wasn't completely clear to the member from Dufferin-Caledon. I think it's important early on a Tuesday morning to provide clarity. It's clear, Speaker, members of the official opposition are a little unclear as to the discussion that we're having. So no, I don't want to talk about the \$6billion hidden deficit. I don't want to talk about Walkerton. I don't want to talk about the sale of the 407. I don't want to talk about any of that stuff. The clarity that I want to bring to the discussion today is Bill 177. It's actually what we're talking about.

I do want to thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for talking about symbolism. Symbols are important. They're important to people in my community. They're important, I'm sure, to the people of his community. I thank him for keeping the debate this morning and the discussion today at a certain altitude, let's call it. I also want to thank, of course, the member from Welland for her comments with respect to the right that she and the rest of us have in this House to debate and discuss and analyze legislation. She is 100% right. As my colleague, the member from Ottawa South, suggested in his debate, in his discussion and his comments, that is quite rightly the responsibility of all of us in this Legislature. I do look forward to the discussion.

I hope that I didn't imply in my opening comments that I didn't think we should debate and discuss. I just didn't want us to be in a world where the debate and discussion became circular and that that somehow delays passage of this bill—let's call it unnecessarily—given that it's relatively straightforward. But the member opposite is 100% right: We do have a responsibility to debate and discuss, but this is relatively straightforward.

To my colleague, the member from Ottawa South: I do want to conclude by saying thank you, not only for the comments today, but thank you for the leadership that you've shown with respect to increasing the accountability and the openness that we bring to all matters in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll try to keep the first part with a semblance of a straight face after listening to that, talking about keeping it at a high level and then getting right into the usual mud from him.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 177, the MPP Salary Freeze Act, today in the Legislature.

As I stated in my remarks last week, it's our firm belief that all of us in Ontario have a part to play in turning our province around and getting our finances headed in the right direction again. Sadly, this government continues to feel that it's more important to appear to be doing something than actually taking real action. Our caucus continues to support an across-the-board public sector wage freeze, so the burden is shared equally. Instead, this government's failed wage freeze saw increases given to eight out of 10 contracts over the past three years.

Now, I know he enjoys reading my Fedeli Focus on Finance so much that, for the next section, I am actually going to read the entire first Fedeli Focus on Finance,

which dealt with an actual wage freeze.

Mr. Todd Smith: This is volume 1, number 1.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This is volume 1, number 1 October 16, two thousand—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Is it leather bound?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I could have it leather bound for you if you would—actually, you're going to see it printed in a small book form very shortly.

"Over one million people work for one of Ontario's thousands of government employers. These range from your local school and hospital to the provincial bureaucracy, our casinos and liquor stores. So it's not surprising that salaries and benefits for government workers are the single biggest expense in the provincial budget. Controlling these costs was the primary tool the government said it would use to wrestle down Ontario's historic budget deficits by 2017-18. However, recent research—using Ministry of Labour data—reveals the government has not succeeded in freezing wages for government workers. In fact, there are hundreds of examples of deals agreed to by the government that have resulted in wage increases."

I go on to suggest seeing the accompanying spreadsheet. Those spreadsheets are available. They are only from the Ministry of Labour website and they show a surprising result. This is a quote from the Minister of Finance on July 20: "We can't manage the deficit without addressing what is the single biggest line in our budget—public sector compensation."

Speaker, "Public sector compensation costs make up 55 cents of every dollar spent on programs. Prior to the recession the government had been exceedingly generous in handing out pay increases." And we show the annual growth here in pay increase percentage from 1991 to 1995 of 1.9%; 1996 to 2003, up 2%; and then we get from 2004 to 2009, up 2.9%.

0930

"Instead of using legislation, the government sought to achieve its pay freeze through thousands of individual negotiations. Remember—there are 4,000 collective agreements in Ontario's government sector. Seven out of every 10 public employees are members of a labour union.

"The 2010 budget did legislate a freeze for nonunionized employees, which it claimed would save \$750 million. It was only revealed later by the Canadian Press that the government's freeze did not include things like performance bonuses, which went to 98% of eligible managers.

"In the 2012 budget, the government reiterated its commitment to freezing compensation, estimating this would save \$6 billion over three years."

There is an accompanying chart here, Speaker, with the backup showing how they estimated the \$6 billion in savings.

"However, without using legislation to enforce it, the freeze was always going to be difficult to implement. Even with respect to legislation used to freeze teacher compensation—known as Bill 115—approximately 40% of teachers continued to move through the salary grid, collecting pay increases. And in an effort to repair the relationship between the current government and Ontario's teachers' unions, the Premier promised elementary teachers they would receive a 2% wage increase next fall, without asking for concessions or offsets. According to the Globe and Mail, the deal 'will cost the treasury \$112 million every year.'

"Numerous exceptions were made to the government's wage freeze, including:

"MPAC: Employees at the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. received wage increases of 2% in the first two years and 2.2% in the third and fourth years.

"Metrolinx: Workers at this provincial transit agency saw wage increases of 2% in each of the first and second years, and 2.3% in the final year.

"Ontario Medical Association: In November 2012, the government handed out a \$100-million compensation increase.

"LCBO: This summer, employees received 'signing bonuses' of roughly \$1,600 per employee.

"OLG Slots at Woodbine: A week after the LCBO deal"—naturally—"employees at OLG's Slots at Woodbine were given ... \$1,200 signing bonuses over two years."

So despite saying one thing, as we've heard from this government, they actually do something completely opposite. They said that there's a wage freeze, but then they have all these exceptions.

The list of exceptions goes on and on: University of Windsor, OPG, Niagara Parks Commission, Royal Conservatory of Music, Alcohol and Gaming Commission, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan board, the Pan Am Games committee—we've heard so much from our MPP from Barrie on that—Ryerson University, the Elementary Teachers' Federation, Hydro One—we've heard so much from our member from Nepean—Carleton on that one.

"Since a wage freeze went into effect in 2010, approximately eight out of 10 collective agreements in the broader public sector have included compensation increases."

Again, I've asked that you look at the accompanying spreadsheets. You can go on fedeli.com and download the spreadsheets from there. I know you'll be rushing to do that—F-E-D-E-L-I.com—and you will be able to download the Focus on Finance numbers 1 to 6, and the

accompanying sheets. I know you're dying—you can head out right now and download that.

"A wage freeze is still necessary. The government set a target to eliminate Ontario's enormous budget shortfalls by 2017-18, but it never laid out a plan to do that.

"This work was contracted out to independent economist Don Drummond, formerly of TD Bank, who warned that, instead of balancing, the current plan would actually triple the province's debt to \$411 billion by 2017 if the government kept spending on such a huge scale."

Of course, since then, we have now seen that the budget deficit is even greater than was forecasted, and we're well on our way to reaching Don Drummond's sad projection.

"Even before the release of the Drummond report, the government had been warned its fiscal plan was unlikely

to balance the budget by 2017-18."

Here's what the Auditor General had to say: "In past negotiated settlements, public sector salary increases have often exceeded the inflation rate. Even after the government's announcement in 2010 that it would not fund such increases, most collective agreements negotiated since have still resulted in wage increases."

"Provincial revenue forecasts are no better than when the government said it required a wage freeze to meet its balanced budget targets. No further expenditure restraint has been announced to offset these increases, and the government has already backed off of some of its

existing plans.

"Before stepping down last year, the previous Premier and finance minister went so far as to draft legislation to provide a legal framework for enforcing the wage freeze, since negotiations weren't working. Entitled the Protecting Public Services Act, this 84-page piece of legislation has not been tabled by the current government. In fact, the 2013 budget removed all references to a wage freeze and instead proposed to 'work together' to achieve desired outcomes.

"Rather than a wage freeze, per se, the finance minister now says the government will 'advocate for wage constraint,' refuses to use the term 'wage freeze' and appears to be explicitly backing away from the policy of his predecessor."

Let's hear a little bit of then and a little bit of now. In budget 2012: "Where collective agreements cannot be negotiated that are consistent with the fiscal plan ... the government will consider all options to meet its fiscal goals, including intervention through legislation or other means." That was their budget plan.

Now, in the September 2013 document: "We're working closely with the stakeholders involved to administer negotiations within the pay envelope that we now have."

In the conclusion of this document, Speaker: "Ontario has a serious problem and the government is not being honest about it."

The key questions that remain are: "If the government's wage freeze has failed, does the province's fiscal plan still include the estimated \$6-billion savings from this measure?" And finally, "If the government's wage

freeze has failed, does it still expect to balance the budget by 2017-18?"

I have put those in as order paper questions, Speaker. You can only imagine the response that I received to both

those important questions.

This past weekend, in fact on Saturday, the National Post published an op-ed piece that I penned. The original title was Ontario's Wynne-Loss Record, Wynne spelled: W-Y-N-N-E. I thought it was a catchy title but the National Post decided to change the title. Nonetheless, the column did run. It highlights the hole the Liberal government has dug us into over the past decade. I'd like to take a moment and go over it as it pertains directly to Bill 177.

"In the 2013 budget, the Liberals stressed they were 'on track' to balance the province's books by 2017-18." In fact, the Premier and finance minister "continue to repeat the claim. But much like the gas plant scandal,

we're being misled by this government.

"Newly released internal documents confirm the government has no plan to stop their Greece-style accumulation of debt. One 2013 Ministry of Finance document stated that for 2014-15 and 2015-16, Ontario is 'not on track to meet 2012 budget deficit targets.'" Again, Speaker, I'm quoting from the National Post op-ed that I penned.

"The documents also show the government was at least \$3.6 billion off the pace needed to balance by 2017-18. Cabinet, which is well aware of that fact, knowingly decided to increase the shortfall to \$4.5 billion at its

March 2013 pre-budget retreat."

Coincidentally, that difference is the same value of concessions made to ensure NDP support of the budget. Did the government and the NDP have a budget deal in place in March 2013, and is a similar deal already in place this year? Speaker, I asked the question: Why is that important?

Well, last week's Fraser Institute report illustrated that while California took necessary steps to improve their debt situation, "Ontario government spending remains out of control. Debt and deficits are a major and immediate threat to our ability to attract jobs as high taxes and user fees drive businesses out of the province. Without urgent action, Ontario will lose more jobs, and the government will not be able to afford our health and education programs.

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"California's debt is \$144.8 billion; Ontario's is \$267.5 billion. But as a percentage of GDP and per capita, Ontario's debt is five times greater than California's. The report warns that, 'Recent trends have put Ontario on an unsustainable trajectory of ever-higher debt'" and that "spending restraint is the key to restoring fiscal sanity.'

"Economist Don Drummond warned the Liberals two years ago that we must change course"—in his words— "swiftly and boldly." But only now is Premier Wynne planning another conversation on whether to take any of the urgent actions he recommended" two years ago, and thus Ontario staggers in the wrong direction. Some "600,000 men and women woke up today without a job. Heinz, Kellogg's and Caterpillar abandoned Ontario for greener pastures. They still make ketchup, cereal and earth-moving equipment—just not here. Skyrocketing energy rates, high taxes and crushing red tape are killing jobs and ripping families apart.

"The Premier can't credibly insist she can balance the budget when her own internal documents show she has 'no plans.' This is irrefutable proof that this government can't be trusted. We need a government that will

implement a turnaround plan immediately."

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation also chimed in on Bill 177, and I wanted to bring some of their concerns to the floor of this Legislature now. This was written by Candice Malcolm:

"The Wynne government announced again this week that it wants to continue its wage freeze on MPPs until the budget is balanced. If passed, the MPP Salary Freeze Act would stop the scheduled pay increases set for this April and would put off any wage increases until the public accounts confirm the budget is balanced.

"Not a bad idea. But why stop with just elected officials?" As the member from Nipissing-Renfrew-Pembroke said, why just 107 people? Candice Malcolm says, "Everyone knows the real driver of the deficit in Ontario is the broader public service and government employee compensation. Premier Wynne is freezing the

wrong wages.

"There is little concern about runaway compensation for MPPs at Queen's Park, who are already capped at earning 75% of their federal counterparts. MPPs have been under a wage freeze for eight of the past 11 years. And thanks to a compensation overhaul by former Premier Mike Harris, when MPPs leave office, they receive a defined contribution pension instead of the overly rich defined-benefit scheme received by most other government employees.

"While it is good news that taxpayers will not be obliged to foot the bill for big pay increases for politicians, this wage freeze will save taxpayers approximately \$390,550 in 2014. Heck, you could make every MPP work for free and it would only save taxpayers \$12.5 million. These are drops in the bucket of

the \$11.9-billion provincial deficit.

"The real problem for taxpayers in Ontario is covering the tab for compensation packages of over 1.35 million provincial government workers in Ontario, and the vast benefits that exist in the Ontario public service. Employee compensation accounts for half of the provincial budget, without including most pension costs.

"On paper, the last two Ontario budgets have included a wage freeze for government workers. To quote the 2013 budget on government employees, 'all aspects of compensation plans are frozen, and base salaries cannot be increased."

be increased.

"Unfortunately, the Wynne government continued to negotiate with unions, and caved on a number of deals leading to higher compensation through loopholes, blurred lines and broken promises. The government has handed out signing bonuses, lump sum payments in return for deferred raises in 2015, and a flat out wage increase for the elementary teachers federation.

"The wage freeze in Ontario meant nothing.

"If the Ontario government were to actually, honest to goodness, freeze all government employees wages for the next year, it would save taxpayers an estimated \$2 billion. That would start to take a real chunk out of this year's deficit—a deficit that sees no end in sight.

"New information on the state of Ontario's finances came to light thanks to PC finance critic Vic Fedeli. Among other revelations, we learned that not only is this government well short of its projections to balance the budget by 2017-18, but they are not being transparent with their books.

"According to documents prepared for the Wynne government by officials in the Ministry of Finance, the 'key actions to eliminate the deficit' include 'reducing pensions expense through agreements and pension reforms' and 'no funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements. Salaries for designated groups frozen until 2017-18.""

Candice Malcolm continues in her column: "These are their words. The Wynne government knows exactly what it needs to do to balance the budget. We just hope they eventually come to terms with their own advice.

"You cannot manage the deficit without addressing the largest line item in the budget: government employee compensation."

Speaker, as you can see here, the government continues to tinker around the edges, and as we proved through their own documents last week, the government has no plans to balance the budget.

I'd like to go into some of those details with the latest Focus on Finance. For the member from Vaughan, it's volume 1, number 6. You can look it up. It's March 17, 2014.

Mr. Todd Smith: Saint Patrick's Day.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was a lovely St. Patrick's Day presentation.

Speaker, I will read from the published document:

"In the 2013 Ontario budget, the current government went to great pains to stress that it is 'on track' to balance the province's books by 2017-18. In fact, the Premier and the finance minister have repeated this in the Legislature and put it in writing as recently as this month.

"However, there is much evidence that casts serious doubts about the validity of this claim. For instance, as raised in a previous edition of Focus"—the one I read earlier—"there was no mention in the 2013 budget of the \$6 billion of savings the government had previously booked from an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. There is no explanation as to whether this was still being factored into the government's planning, or conversely, if it wasn't, how the government plans to make up for that \$6 billion discrepancy."

Speaker, we have now confirmed that the government is not being honest about the state of the province's finances. This issue will highlight many other budget shortfalls that have been released. This will prove what the government is saying publicly about eliminating the deficit and what they discuss internally are two very different things.

We have a serious financial challenge ahead of us. We know they're forecasting a deficit of \$11.7 billion this year, \$10.2 billion next year and \$7.2 billion the year after. Now, of course, we understand there's a further \$4.5-billion gap.

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As Candice Malcolm pointed out, the savings of this is \$390,550. She also calls it, again, a drop in the bucket of the \$11.7-billion provincial deficit. That's just the deficit forecast this year, never mind the fact that our deficit this year will be larger than every other provincial deficit and the federal government's deficit put together. That's how serious a crisis we're in. The government thinks they're going to solve it with a \$390,550 fix—a drop in the bucket. This is not going to do it.

In February 2013, the Ministry of Finance clearly identified the government is at least \$3.5 billion off the pace needed to balance the budget by 2017-18. That's another billion dollars in the 2014-15 budget and a further \$2.5 billion in the 2015-16 budget. The fiscal gap came from the existing ministry plans that fall short of managing within allocations. Even two days later, they grew that to \$3.6 billion. This is a tax-and-spend government that does not understand the serious implications that that taxing is having on its citizenry and the problems that are created by this massive spending.

The other provinces are beginning to balance. The federal government is forecasting to balance, and these guys are going from a \$9.2-billion deficit last year to a further forecasted \$11.7-billion deficit this year. Now, I'm quite sure that in the budget it will magically be reduced an amount, but they're going the wrong way—a \$10.1-billion forecast the year after, a \$7.2-billion deficit forecast the further year.

Now, cabinet was well aware of that extra \$3.6-billion gap when they went on their retreat in the third week of March last year. But instead of taking, as Drummond called it, decisive action on the problem that we have in Ontario—the problem that everybody understands—they went the wrong way. Instead of reducing the massive hole in their budgeting, cabinet actually increased the shortfall \$900 million more, as I said earlier, coincidently, the same number that they gave in concessions to the NDP. This is a \$4.5-billion discrepancy. Instead of fixing the problem, these guys are adding to the problem. This is unconscionable. When you have a family where one of the family members may lose a job, that's like us losing our revenue. When one of the family members loses a job, you tighten the belt. You don't go out and put an in-ground pool in. That's what these guys are doing.

The Bank of Canada told us that we will not meet our revenue forecasts for 2013 and, by the way, we will not meet them for 2014 either. Like a family where one of the members loses a job, when their revenue is down, our revenue is down. Your family would cut back. These

guys went on a spending spree—another \$900-million spending spree with our money—tax-and-spend. "It needs to be noted that the difference in the shortfall preand post-cabinet retreat—\$900 million—is the same value of concessions offered to the third party in order to ensure passage of the budget (Canadian Press, May 2, 2013)"—put that number at \$900 million—a heck of a coincidence. "It raises the question of whether the government and third party already had a budget deal in place March 2013, if not earlier."

Perhaps equally troubling is that there are still no projections in any of the government's numbers for 2017-18. In the fall economic statement, they gave us a document with a big hole. There were no numbers for any of the ministries, yet magically it balanced. We have to trust them. We have to believe them that it's somehow magically going to balance. This is unprecedented: a fall economic statement where the last two years has N/A.

They just don't give you any numbers.

I've asked them in this Legislature day after day after day, what are you hiding? What is in those numbers that you don't want us to see? It's a fall economic statement without a statement. If you got your statement from your credit card and there were no numbers but just a total that said, "Send us \$7,000 this month," why would you do that? You want to see those numbers. You want to see, "What numbers did you use? What line did you use for health spending? What line did you use for justice spending? What line did you use for justice spending? What line did you use for social spending?" We want to know. They just say, "We're not going to give you any individual numbers," just, "Here's the bottom line." It balances in 2017-18, magically.

Meanwhile, none of the other numbers this year are balanced. We have an \$11.7-billion deficit forecast, a \$10.1-billion deficit forecast the year after, a \$7.2-billion deficit forecast the year after that. Add about \$4.5 billion if these numbers are right. And it goes to balanced budget the next year. There, it's back at zero. Aren't we good?

Speaker, this is going to be an amazing transformation, especially in light of the fact that they did not implement the wage freeze they said they needed to implement to save \$6 billion to get them to that balanced budget. So no wage freeze, none of Drummond's serious, hard—

Mr. Todd Smith: Bold.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —bold—thank you—items to implement. They didn't do any of that. But magically we're going to get to zero in 2017-18, and they say, "Don't worry. Trust us." This is the same government whose numbers said that the gas plant scandal would only cost \$40 million when it cost \$1.1 billion. This is the same set of Liberal math and Liberal numbers.

Does the fact that there are no numbers mean the discrepancy is indeed larger than the \$4.5 billion? Remember, that \$4.5 billion is just above and beyond the other numbers. That isn't the total. This is above and beyond. That will put us at \$11.5 billion next year and \$9.4 billion the year after, but don't worry; we're at zero right away after that.

So in a previous Focus edition—I think it was number 4, for your reference, member from Vaughan—we highlighted the fact that the fall economic statement failed to include those medium-term outlook numbers. That would have included the tables showing how the revenue, spending and debt will look for the next three years. First this government missed the October 6 deadline last year for the first set of numbers. Under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, they had to publish those numbers last October 6. The act says that two years after an election you publish this set of numbers. They never came. Those numbers never came, Speaker. We have no numbers.

In the fall economic statement, a big hole in the budget—no numbers shown.

Last month, February 15, again under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, this government was to turn over their third-quarter numbers. No numbers. We got a letter saying, "You aren't getting them."

Where are their numbers? What are they hiding that they haven't shown us numbers? If the October numbers were for the first two years, when is the last time we actually got any real numbers from this government?

We're very concerned, as every Ontarian should be, as every member in the finance community should be, about not having any real numbers whatsoever.

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Speaker, in another set of documents, we realize that in order to balance the spending, reductions of between \$6.1 billion and \$6.9 billion are required outside of the core ministries of health, education, post-secondary, justice, and social services. Why hasn't this government told us where those cuts are? They like to point fingers. They like to accuse all the other parties of what they would do, but this government is scratching their heads. They have absolutely no plan whatsoever to tell us how they plan to balance the budget.

They need a 9.6% reduction—a decline in spending—in 2016-17 and 2017-18 to get to that balanced budget, doing it their way. Where is that money coming from? Why won't they tell us? Now, we know that they had planned to reduce pension expenses through pension reform. They failed to tell their members that. We know that they planned no funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements. They plan to freeze salaries, they say, until 2017-18, but we've heard that before, and they didn't come through. I wonder, have they spoken with Smokey Thomas about this planned wage freeze, and is that why we haven't seen them implement the wage freeze? Is that the issue that we have here?

We also know that several other factors have occurred, that this government put revenue in the budget that is not going to happen. We also know there are greater expenses that have been incurred, that are going to affect their budget. These are basically the key items that will affect the budget. Pan Am—as I mentioned earlier, our MPP from Barrie has done a remarkable job in peeling

back this Pan Am scandal and trying to get to the root of it—where we see millions, then tens of millions, then hundreds of millions, and perhaps billions are over the Pan Am Games that we hear every morning are on time and on budget. The budget keeps moving—I guess if you just keep moving the budget, you're going to be on budget. That money was not accounted for in the budget. There is a line for it, but it has far surpassed that already.

In the budget, the government planned on revenue from the OLG, the gaming organizations and lottery sales. They planned on 29 new casinos.

Mr. Todd Smith: How many of those are built?
Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, there are none built.

They expected to save \$265 million—it's in the budget, a savings of \$265 million—by having a fire sale of Ontario Northland. Thankfully, we brought the Auditor General in, at my request, who did an audit of the sale of Ontario Northland, and it turns out the government made yet another mistake. They're not going to save the \$265 million that is in their budget. They're going to spend \$820 million for this fire sale. So none of that is accounted for in the budget.

Now, whether they go through with part or all of the fire sale is unknown, so let's give them the benefit of the doubt for five minutes and perhaps that entire \$820 million won't be a budget hit, but we know for sure—we'll stick with the facts—that they will not save \$265 million. Where is that accounted for in the budget?

Go back to those 29 casinos that were going to generate more than \$600 million in additional revenue between 2012-13 and 2014-15 and more than \$1 billion planned in their budget by 2017-18. Yes, that didn't happen, Speaker. There is no casino opened in the GTA. The other 28 casinos that they planned—nobody's rolling the dice at those casinos yet, so to speak.

There is another billion dollars that won't show up on the revenue side of the budget, yet they're still spending as if all that revenue is here. This is going to be solved by Bill 177, when we save \$390,550. Somehow, all the problems are going to be solved with that.

Speaker, the comments that I've read left some questions. The shortfall that we have found—a believable description of that shortfall will be the fact that they already did a deal with the NDP last year before the budget. That's where the \$900 million came from. We already know that the government has failed to disclose their October 6 numbers, the medium-term outlook numbers in the fall economic statement, and the third-quarter results on February 15, as prescribed by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act.

This government clearly has no plan whatsoever to balance the budget by 2017-18. This bill that they're bringing—we will support it; I have said that right from the first, right off the bat—but it is more of your tinkering around the edges. This is all about sizzle and no steak. In the farm community in Chisholm, they would say, "This is all hat, no cattle," because that's exactly what this is: a \$390,550 savings so we can see the flag

being waved by this party as if they're actually doing something, when we know that they're not.

It has been very clear from the outset—in the two and a half years that I've been here—that they have no plan, no idea. The fact that we still have 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job, still waking up without a job two and a half years later, is proof positive that they have no plan and they provide no hope.

Now, contrast that with our party. We have toured almost 30 communities since Christmas, many of us here. The member from—

Mr. Todd Smith: Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —Prince Edward—Hastings was at the hearings in Kingston, the pre-budget consultation hearings.

We heard three things loud and clear, and from all groups. We heard: skyrocketing hydro rates, high taxes and crushing red tape. No matter whether you went from Sarnia to Kenora to the Ring of Fire to Timmins to Cornwall and back to Toronto, and everywhere in between: skyrocketing hydro rates, crushing red tape and high taxes.

This government offers a 46% increase in hydro rates over the next five years, higher taxes coming, and even more red tape. This is what we understand from this government.

This is the government that, when they got into power—there was a Red Tape Commission. Former Premier Mike Harris formed a Red Tape Commission. It was a temporary agency that became a full-time agency to reduce red tape. They had a mandate and were doing a beautiful job. One of the first things this government did when they got into power was eliminate the Red Tape Commission. That's their idea of handling red tape: Get rid of the people who talk about crushing red tape in this province.

High taxes, skyrocketing hydro rates, and crushing red tape weren't only discussed by Liam McGuinty of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They weren't only discussed by Candice Malcolm of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. They weren't only talked about by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They were talked about by social planning councils, community action groups and food banks. The skyrocketing hydro rates are hurting families. It's hurting businesses. It's killing jobs, but it's hurting families.

High taxes, and the future taxes we have coming, will cause businesses to scratch their heads and wonder whether to stay in Ontario. The crushing red tape, again, isn't just affecting businesses; it's also affecting the social planning councils. We heard from them, when they said, "We can't send our worker out to do casework at a family's home because they have six hours of computer work to do to satisfy some government forms that make no sense to us." We heard that over and over, Speaker. This government are the ones who cancelled the Red Tape Commission to try to solve at least one of these problems.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has presented the million-jobs plan. Crushing red tape will be addressed. Skyrocketing hydro rates—we will cancel the feed-in tariff program that has caused your hydro rate to triple over the last 10 years—to double in eight years, to triple in 10 years, and it's going to go up 46% more. I don't believe that, by the way, Speaker. I believe they're going to skyrocket even further under this plan, and they will not tell us that. With the amount of wind turbines they plan to put on the grid, this is going to skyrocket. According to the Auditor General, the global adjustment, as a result of wind turbines, was \$700 million in 2011, on its way to \$8.1 billion. Who pays for that? Ratepayers. That's going to be added to your hydro bill. This is no 46% increase, Speaker. This is a monumental increase that's coming. That's their solution to it. Ours is to cancel the feed-in tariff program and bring some semblance to the hydro system

High taxes—we know that this government is going to increase taxes. We know they're going to increase business taxes in Ontario. We know that's coming. I don't think they're going to stop there. There's nothing these guys won't tax. We saw it very clearly when De Beers opened the Victor mine 150 kilometres west of Attawapiskat. After they had spent \$1 billion in the ground, getting the mine almost ready to open and in production, these guys smelled money. They implemented a diamond tax. Ontario's first and only diamond mine, and they said, "Oh, but don't worry. We're going to tax every diamond mine."

Mr. Todd Smith: How many are there?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There's the one.

Mr. Todd Smith: Yes, that's what I thought.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So we can see that this government is going to continue to tax and spend. This bill of theirs, Bill 177, is nothing more than window-dressing.

I see you're on the edge of your seat. Is my time up, Speaker? Then I'm going to sit down and say thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak for—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm sorry. I still have 12 minutes and 53 seconds. I guess we'll be back with more scintillating conversation. Stay tuned. Thank you, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I do want to welcome in the gallery today five different people from Sudbury: Paula Peroni, Biddy Farrell, Matt Southern, Lynne Raven and Chris Nerpin.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure today to introduce my nephew who is visiting us from Vancouver and

is a principal cellist with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Ari Barnes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today a very strong member of the business community in Oakville, Mr. John Vail.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to congratulate Jane Oleksiw for being assigned page captain for the day in the Legislature. Jane is a grade 8 student at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in Virgil, just outside of Niagara-on-the-Lake in the great riding of Niagara Falls. Today I would also like to welcome her parents, who are up there in the gallery, Bob and Tina Oleksiw; their daughter Julia; and Jane's friend Anna Smyth. Thank you very much for coming.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome to the gallery a group of students, many of them from the University of Toronto, who are engaged in a variety of research projects on post-secondary education for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We are introducing guests, and it would be nice to make sure that we didn't hear any heckling while we were introducing our guests.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And that includes the member from Renfrew.

The member from Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I have six people I would like to introduce today. Ils sont ici à la législature pour écouter les questions: Anne Godbout, Gisèle Rousseau, André Choquet, Verity Crew-Nelson, Danielle Lamothe et Lynda Rinkenbach. Bienvenue à la législature.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I appreciate that. I know that today the Minister of Municipal Affairs is actually going to be officially resigning from the Legislature. We wish her the best of luck—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not appropriate.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to welcome the family of page Milana Thibodeau Morris: father, Rod Morris; mother, JoAnne Thibodeau; and sister, Arielle Thibodeau Morris. Please welcome them to the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Thursday, March 20, 2014, the government House leader, having provided the required notice under standing order 21(c), rose on a point of privilege regarding a question posed to the Minister of Finance during oral questions on Tuesday, March 18. The government House leader alleged that the member from Nipissing, while posing his questions.

tion to the Minister of Finance, knowingly "disclosed the contents of a confidential committee document" and, as a result, had committed a contempt of the Legislature.

In making his submission, the government House leader argued that the member for Nipissing disregarded an order of the Standing Committee on Estimates which protected certain documents the committee received from the Ministry of Finance as confidential. The House leader also stated that this potential breach of privilege was raised in the House because the Standing Committee on Estimates "is not currently sitting," and that it was brought forward at the earliest opportunity, given the need to verify the accusation.

The member for Nipissing, in both his written and oral submission on this matter, contended that the information contained in his question was sourced from a set of "redacted documents that were to be made public" by the committee under the same committee order referred to by the government House leader. He also argued that this issue should have been properly raised at the Standing Committee on Estimates and that, in his opinion, it was not raised in a timely manner.

I am not concerned with the time taken to raise this matter and find that it was reasonable in the circumstances, and for the reasons given by the government House leader.

However, after reading and hearing the submissions made on this point of privilege, the Speaker is in the end presented with conflicting opinions, but without the means to reconcile them. This power rests with the Standing Committee on Estimates, which, as the custodian of the documents in question, is best able to decide if the allegation of improper disclosure is correct, and it can bring this matter properly before the House by adopting and presenting a report, if it chooses to do so.

As to the assertion that the Standing Committee on Estimates is not currently sitting, in fact, standing committees are struck for the duration of a Parliament. Although this committee has completed its consideration of last year's estimates, it can meet on a matter as important as members' privileges, and it is the proper starting point if this matter is to be pursued.

The government House leader's point of privilege not having been preceded by these necessary steps, I must find that it has been prematurely brought to the attention of this House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. There is a disturbing scenario playing out right now. Last October 6, your government failed to deliver the long-

range assessment of Ontario's finances as obligated under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. We were told that they would be in the fall economic statement, but they weren't. In fact, there were no individual ministry expense numbers listed—just the total program spending, which magically falls in 2017 to balance the budget. On February 15, the transparency act also requires you to publish third-quarter results. Again, nothing.

Premier, you continue to keep any real numbers from this Legislature. Is it because any one of those numbers would demonstrate you're not on track to balance the budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I invite the member opposite, when this year's budget comes out, unlike last year, to actually read the document, because he obviously has a number of questions. I'm not sure whether he actually read the fall economic statement but, again, I would ask that he read the fall economic statement because, as I've said, there is information in that document that makes it clear what our intentions are, what the numbers are. I hope that he will take the opportunity to do that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will say this: We will be bringing the budget forward. We will be making it clear that we are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18, but we will also make it clear that we are intent on making the investments in people, in infrastructure and in a strong business climate to make sure that we have a prospering and growing economy—investments that the member opposite would not be willing to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, it's too bad that you didn't tell the bond-rating agencies last May that you had a \$4.5-billion gap in your budget. That's above and beyond your planned deficit of \$11.7 billion this year, above your planned deficit of \$10.4 billion next year and above the \$7.2-billion deficit the year after. Your annual deficits are larger than every other province plus the national deficit combined. It's clear you can't manage our money, so while other provinces are putting people back to work, your cabinet was told, "There are fewer jobs relative to our population and more unemployed," and "Per capita output of the economy remains below its pre-recession benchmark."

Premier, you're failing Ontarians. You can't make the tough decisions, and the ones you do make turn into scandals. If you won't bring a plan to turn Ontario

around, will you at least-

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. *Interjections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The plan that the member opposite and his leader are putting forward is to cut and slash across government. It's to fire education workers, fire health care workers, and drive good jobs out of the

province by undermining labour. If the member opposite is asking, will we take that path? We absolutely will not. That is not in the best interests of the people of this province. It is not in the best interests of the economy of this province.

We will bring our budget forward. We will make the investments that are necessary. We will partner with business. We will work with key industries to make sure that they can expand, like the announcement I made yesterday at Fiera Foods, where there will be more jobs created because of our partnering with that business. We will continue to do that work.

It would be wonderful if the member opposite joined with us, because it is in the best interests of the people of this province that we make those investments and put that support in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, it seems there's no limit to your planned revenue tools. You're going to tax hardworking families, you're going to tax business; maybe a tobacco tax, a transit increase. Your own finance ministry proposes another way to kill jobs while restocking your coffers. Here's what they had to say about your "partnering with business." This is a quote: "Development charges are a great idea. The developers of condos make a killing (presumably, given how many condos are always being built)."

This is how you view the business community: just another pocket to pick. "They make a killing. Let's go after them." Never mind that they actually put people to work. Why not kill that industry, too, just as long as you get a few bucks from them before they leave? Is that how you plan to budget, Premier—kill the golden goose?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance. *Interjections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite has engaged in rhetoric and trash talk about the good work that Ontarians have been doing over the last number of years since the recession. He hasn't read the reports over the last year, for that matter.

Don't take it from us. The C.D. Howe Institute, someone that they always respect, has come out and said very clearly that Ontario leads all provinces right throughout Canada on transparency and on integrity of our numbers. We rated an A because of the work that we've done. They, however, did not.

We'll continue to do what's right for Ontarians. We'll continue to put on a very wholesome and strong plan to create jobs—and it has created jobs. You guys keep wanting to destroy the well-being of our economy by the reckless cuts that you're making. On this side of the House, we're making investments, and we're being positive to all of Ontario and for Canada.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question as well is to the Premier. Over the weekend, you touted the line called "What leadership is." Now, I can tell you what it isn't: It's two OPP investigations into your government. It's losing 330,000 manufacturing jobs. It is using a billion dollars of taxpayer money to save five Liberal seats. It's breaking international law. It's withholding information from the electorate on the \$4.5-billion hole in your budget. So they've demonstrated what leadership is not.

I can tell you what leadership is. It is testing your policies and your record with the electorate. So we ask, on this side of the House, will you do that? Will you finally table a budget, and will you put it to a vote, not only in this assembly but also with the electorate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite for the question. I'm just going to talk a little bit about some of the things that have happened over the previous few years.

When we came into office, 68% of students in this province were graduating from high school; now, 83% of kids are graduating from high school. When we come into office, the energy system was in disarray. We have invested in transmission. We have a stable energy grid. We have generation of clean, renewable energy in this province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When we came into office, there was no measurement of wait times in the health care system.

Interjection

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We led the way in measuring wait times, and those wait times that we have measured have come down.

From my perspective, those are all impacts on the lives of people in this province that will have a huge difference. That's what leadership is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is a Premier who has led the way on a few things—innovation, for example, in scandals. The Premier knows full well that this recent scandal with her budget is actually the gas plants 2.0.

I'm going to run down the formula. It's actually something we can now count on with this government. First, it's desperation by a government that is about to lose everything. Second, you're going to find documents from bureaucrats cautioning them against the Liberals' preferred course of action. Third, it's that they developed spin lines and media diversions to manipulate the media and the press, like tanning beds—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —like accountability bills, to throw us all off. Fourth, we go back to those documents put forward by the bureaucrats and we find that they either redact them or they destroy them. Five, when all else fails, they try to shut down debate by either prorogation or trying to censor a member who has exposed them for what they are. That's not leadership. The government has an opportunity. The Premier has an opportunity. Show some leadership. Demonstrate it with a budget. Table it here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We actually will table the budget here; we will not go to Magna or anywhere else. We will table the budget here. I look forward to the member opposite reading that budget.

Let me just outline the kinds of things that we are going to be focusing on in order to grow the economy, because I really think that is critical at this juncture. We are going to invest in infrastructure. Unlike the party opposite, we believe that having a plan to invest in roads and bridges and transit is very important to the growth of the economy. We're going to be investing in skills and training, because we know that businesses come here and businesses tell us over and over again that the educated workforce is a huge benefit to business in this province, and it draws them here. We're going to continue to invest in a youth strategy—30,000 young people getting placements. Already, more than 9,000 young people have an opportunity. That's the kind of work we're going to be doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sadly, 330,000 manufacturing jobs have left the province under your watch. We have the highest industrial hydro rates in North America. People are leaving—to Quebec, to Manitoba, to New York—to actually set up shop rather than stay here in the great province of Ontario. In fact, if you look at the confidence of that plan, she has lost seven MPPs as of today from her government. I believe, for a new Premier, that is actually unprecedented.

So I just ask the Premier—she will have a day of reckoning whether she wants it or not. At some point in time, there will be an ability for the opposition and the public to look at her books, either when she's out of power or before then. On that day, Ontarians will know the true cost of her premiership and we will know why so many MPPs in her own party do not have confidence in her and have decided either to leave now or leave later. She's desperately clinging to power. She has a choice. Table the budget now. Let Ontarians know what's in it and where that \$4.5 billion is. Will she do it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say: I have the best team in the province. I am so proud of the people that I work with and I am so proud of the people who have done their service and are moving on to other things—the best team. We, as the member opposite knows, passed the legislation that would open the books before an election. We're the government that brought that in. We brought that legislation in because of what had happened under the previous government, where there had been a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit. We brought in legislation that requires government to open the books. We will do that and we have been doing that.

I just want to say that the investments that we are going to make, the balance that we are going to strike between fiscal responsibility and investment, is critical. Roger Martin said that, "Closing the prosperity gap cannot be done without making meaningful and targeted investments in productivity-enhancing resources and tools." We are going to take that advice.

1050

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. After spending months claiming that she's offering real change, this weekend the Premier declared that her new goal is defending the status quo of Dalton McGuinty. For families worried about job loss, that's very concerning. They know that more of the same strategy of sky-high hydro rates and no-strings-attached corporate tax loopholes is going to leave them looking for work.

Just weeks ago, the Premier said people were looking for change. Why is it she is now so determined to offer more of the same?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what I said on the weekend was that this is a very important time in the history of the economy in Ontario and that what we need is to make sure that we make the right decisions. From my perspective, that means playing to our strengths. It means making the investments where they are most necessary, and strategically. That's investing in the talent and skills of our people. It means investing in infrastructure and, I would say to the leader of the third party, that includes transit. It includes making investments in transit, roads, bridges and infrastructure across the province.

It means working with business. It doesn't mean making business the enemy, whether that's small business or large corporations. It means working with them so that they can expand and create jobs. That's what I talked about this weekend, and that's the work that we have been doing and will continue doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier spent the weekend talking about Liberal hands, but for families across Ontario, the only thing steady about the McGuinty legacy is a steady flow of money out of their pockets and the steady flow of jobs out of Ontario.

Those hands brought us the gas plant scandal and billions of dollars in waste. Those hands left Ontario with some of the highest hydro rates, the highest auto insurance rates and an unemployment rate stuck above the national average for years.

Does the Premier really think that offering more of the same is good enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would suggest that what our hands have wrought is not the status quo. We're on track to meet our goal of an average 8% reduction in auto insurance by August 2014. We've increased funding to home care and community services by \$260 million in 2013. That's a 6% increase over last year, and it's \$185 million for CCACs to provide home care services. That's a huge investment in the transformation of the health care system.

We've created the \$100-million Small, Rural and Northern Municipal Infrastructure Fund. That means that those investments in roads and bridges in our northern and rural communities can go ahead. We know that those small economies, those local economies, are dependent on that kind of infrastructure investment.

Recently, four more companies in southwestern Ontario will receive support through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. That's not the status quo, Mr. Speaker. That's investment in economic growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier won her Liberal leadership talking about change and possibility, but it's more and more clear she's offering the same Dalton McGuinty status quo that brought us sky-high hydro rates, a gas plant scandal and left Ontarians down over 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

People want to see action to lower their hydro bills and make life more affordable. People want to see action that creates jobs. Why is the Premier insisting that the same old ideas are somehow working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just continue on the things that we have done that are actually new. I know that the leader of the third party will know that there was a big discussion about the minimum wage, which she did not take part in, but we are raising the minimum wage as of June 11, and then we're bringing legislation. We've brought legislation, that I hope she will support, to index the minimum wage to CPI.

We've introduced legislation to strengthen the Employment Standards Act, and that will provide more protection for vulnerable workers. I would hope that the leader opposite would support that new initiative.

We passed the Local Food Act. As part of that, there's a \$30-million Local Food Fund which is helping to make investments in the agri-food industry to help that industry grow. I hope that the leader of the third party understands that that's a very important thing.

We've passed the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. Those initiatives protect consumers, and I hope that the leader of the third party understands how important that is.

We passed the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It increases the employer health tax exemption. So that is change.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. If we want to see where Liberal hands have steered us into the ditch, we don't have to look much farther than our hydro system. The Premier insists that the system is working, but people like Grant, from Renfrew, for example, disagree. He wrote, "I'm on a fixed income with an older home, and hydro bills are affecting my life." He's upset that his family is paying costs that he calls "way too high," so that others can "make money exporting what we pay for with no return for us."

Why is the Premier so determined to defend a hydro system that leaves people like Grant paying more and

more, and lagging behind?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak to this in the supplementary.

I also know that the people of this province want an electricity system that they can rely on. I understand that there are challenges—and the minister will speak to some of the initiatives we've taken to make sure that we reduce those costs for people, particularly those who are having trouble making ends meet—but when we came into office, the electricity system was in disarray. It was absolutely critical that the neglect that had been in place for years was tended to.

We have done that. We have made those investments, and on top of that, we have moved to a much cleaner and more renewable energy supply. We are very proud of that, and we are going to continue to do that work, at the same time recognizing that there need to be programs in place to help people to deal with their energy costs, and I know the leader of the third party makes sure that her constituents know about all those programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: John, from Sudbury, is working hard to minimize his bills, but he's clear when he says, "We should not be exporting power if we cannot afford to keep rates reasonably low at home.... We should know by now that privatization does not save citizens money. High management costs ... usually end up costing more."

In Manitoba and Quebec, businesses pay literally half of what we're charging Ontario businesses, and they are selling their exports for nearly twice as much. Is the Premier ready to take the waste out of the hydro system and take action to lower rates in Ontario instead of lowering them in the US?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Charlie, from Hamilton, or let's talk about Ann, from Toronto, who were having multiple, multiple smog days every single summer. We had a dirty system and we had a deficit of supply. We invested in new generation. We took the opportunity to clean our air.

That party doesn't care that we had to spend additional dollars for clean energy as opposed to dirty coal. Cheap, dirty coal is what you sound like right now. We cleaned our air, and we have healthier people in our community right now. I hope I have the opportunity in the next question to talk about electricity prices, because your plan is a scam.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's sad to see a Minister of Energy joke about the real struggles of the people in this province. Hydro bills aren't just numbers, he might need to know. People are wondering how they're going to be able to keep up.

Helena, from Hamilton, wrote us to say, "We are a senior couple with limited income and no way to increase our income. The hydro bill keeps increasing, and while we are still able to pay it, my concern is, what happens when one of us dies, and all these expenses of the house will have to come out of one income. Raising the cost of hydro affects all of us, and the country, and we need sensible heads to see how things like funding the export of hydro is affecting those who can least afford it."

Now, is the Premier ready to admit that her hydro plan isn't working and it's time to take the waste out of the hydro system so people like Helena aren't worried about

their future and the future of their families?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're talking about an election these days, and the opposition is asking for an election. There will be a day of reckoning when that party is going to have to stand before the people of Ontario and tell them what they will do.

Mr. Speaker, they don't want new-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I would, and I did

I'm going to ask members to, again, not refer to anyone other than by their title or their riding. That's the kind of heckling that causes the escalation of emotions, and I want it to diminish.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, it's not funny; it's serious.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's too bad. Please finish.

1100

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They talk about creating an energy system that will be beneficial to people in Ontario, yet they will not build new nuclear and they will not refurbish the existing units. There's 50% of our electricity generation that they would cut off at the knees. What are they going to replace it with, how long will it take, what will the cost be and what will that do to increasing prices?

Mr. Speaker, we have comparative prices on electricity costs: Ottawa, 12.39 cents per kilowatt hour;

Edmonton, 13.9—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. At the root of the Ornge scandal, according to the Auditor General's 2012 report, were the following findings: First and foremost, the Ministry of Health failed in its oversight responsibilities. It failed to get proper information relating to patient pickup and response. There was a lack of transparency surrounding the financial affairs of that organization. There were questionable procurement practices that are now under criminal investigation.

That was in 2012. We now have a recent audit report issued by the Ministry of Finance that made 48 findings of Ornge that included the very same issues that the Auditor General identified in 2012. My question to the Premier is: Is she aware of that report? How is it that under new management, a new board, a new CEO and a new amended performance agreement, we have the same issues—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to say that Ornge has already implemented 39 of the 48 recommendations outlined in the report and that progress is being made on the remaining nine. We will continue to work with Ornge as they implement the remaining recommendations.

I can tell you that this work builds on other accountability measures that have been undertaken by Ornge's new leadership. They've released their strategic plan; they've submitted their first quality improvement plan; they're posting salaries of senior leadership online; they're activating the new whistle-blower hotline; they're establishing a conflict-of-interest protocol; they've got their first patient advocate in place; and they've got a travel and business expense policy that requires submitted expenses to be appropriate.

Ornge is on the right track, and I look forward to the member opposite supporting Bill 11.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, you see, we don't believe any of that because under that new board, under the new CEO, under the minister's new oversight branch, under the minister's new amended performance agreement—this audit report was conducted over an entire year under that new management, under that new board, and the same issues appear.

Here they are: a lack of documentation of board decisions; a lack of board approval of significant policies, including procurement, travel and expenses, the compensation system and performance pay; under the new board, contracts valued at between \$100,000 and \$750,000 were not signed in accordance with Ornge's signing authority; reaction/response times are not being properly reported.

I'd like to know from the Premier—because the list goes on; the incompetency continues—how come the

same minister continues to have the responsibility to oversee Ornge and our air ambulance service?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think any independent observer would recognize that Ornge is well into—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order and the member from Durham will come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —a new chapter under the new leadership of Dr. Andrew McCallum and Ian Delaney. They have put together a very strong team. The board is an entirely voluntary board, and they have been dedicated to implementing all of the recommendations. Let me repeat: Ornge has already—

Mr. Frank Klees: Read the report. Hon. Deborah Matthews: I've read it.

Ornge has already implemented 39 of the 48 recommendations. The remaining nine are under way.

What I can tell you is that there has also been an increased focus on patient safety. They have provided additional training for helicopter pilots, including controlled flight into terrain. They've revised operating procedures for night operations. They are installing solar lighting. There's a lot happening at Ornge, and it's all good.

Please pass Bill 11.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, for months, this government has carried on about government transparency and accountability, but what Ontarians are getting is more of the same stonewalling. Now we hear about more firings at the Pan/Parapan Am Games and more fat-cat severances. First it was Ian Troop being replaced by Saäd Rafi. Now, as more executives are being shown the door, new Liberal insiders are walking through that door.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians how much they paid Neala Barton in severance when she left the former Premier's office, how much we're paying her now, is severance included in her new contract and why, and how much are we paying in severance to the most recently fired executives?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport will want to speak to the details. But I just want the member opposite to know that TO2015, the Pan Am group, is working in coordination with the provincial government and the federal government and 15 municipalities to deliver the Pan Am Games. Part of TO2015's mandate is to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the games, and that means dealing with human resources issues.

I have complete confidence in both the chair and the CEO. I know that they are making decisions. We have no

control over the HR decisions in terms of who they may or may not hire, and they will make those decisions. Those decisions are made by the CEO of TO2015. The organizing committee is shifting from the planning stage into the operational stage into the lead-up of the games, so it makes sense that there would be HR changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I think the Premier answered my

question right off the bat: no control.

Speaker, there's a pattern emerging here on the Pan/Parapan Am Games—a pattern that keeps costs going up, whether it is security costs that are ballooning, golden parachutes for well-connected executives or soft landings for Dalton McGuinty insiders like Neala Barton. It's an arrogant way to treat Ontarians' money, and it's time that hard-working taxpaying families got some respect in this province.

Speaker, will the Premier release these contracts and

these severance agreements today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I agree with the member opposite that there's a pattern emerging. The pattern is that members of the opposition and the third party—even though they have the information, they can take part in technical briefings, they're getting the information, and they know that the work is proceeding and that there is going to be a terrific legacy—continue to talk down the Pan/Parapan Am Games. It makes no sense to me. It makes absolutely no sense to me.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just heard a member of the opposition say "a waste of money." I would ask him to talk to the young athletes in his riding. I would ask him to talk to the kids who are swimming and running and training and getting ready for the Pan/Parapan Am Games. I'd ask him to talk to those kids.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail, l'hon. Yasir Naqvi. Speaker, it has been said that how society deals with its youth determines its prosperity—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is warned.

Finish, please.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Our own investments include full-day kindergarten leading up to world-class schooling. This, of course, is especially valued by people in my own riding of Etobicoke North. For many young Ontarians, this is followed by remarkable opportunities at the college and university level.

Speaker, as you may know, our youth employment fund has helped over 8,200 young people find meaningful employment, which of course is commendable. Yet I

still hear how difficult it is for folks to enter the workforce and how internships are often the only way to get in the door. Youth in Etobicoke are concerned about internships, where they are not paid, and I am concerned about this as well.

1110

My question is this: What is the ministry doing to make sure that when young people in my community start a new job, they will be paid for that work?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for asking a very timely question.

We know that building a stronger workforce is about building safe and fair workplaces. In Ontario, the rules about internships are very clear. It does not matter what your job title or position is; if you perform work for someone, you are covered by the Employment Standards Act and deserve to be paid at least the minimum wage. There is, in there, an exemption for co-op students from accredited university and college programs, trainees and self-employed individuals.

The ministry has been very active on this issue to get the word out. We updated our Web page on internships to provide clarity on this particular issue. We also have been proactively writing letters, and reached out to post-secondary institutions, employers and job sites to make sure there is no confusion around what the rules are in the legislation. We are also active on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, making sure that we can broadcast our strong rules to young people in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister—or, in Urdu, Shukriya.

I appreciate your outlining the strong rules that we have on internships in Ontario. My constituents in Etobicoke North in particular value the fact that the ministry is reaching out to young people, businesses and institutions to raise awareness of these rules.

But, Speaker, I sometimes hear from Etobicoke North residents that even though they know the Ministry of Labour is out there to help them, they are reluctant sometimes to reach out. This was also raised in a press conference by the member from Davenport when he announced his private member's bill on internships.

Speaker, my question is this: Are formal complaints and reactive inspections the only way the ministry will investigate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think this is a very, very important and serious question, and I welcome the participation of all members in getting the message across. Speaker, I can assure the member that our government is doing our very best to ensure that our youths' rights are protected.

Any concerns regarding working arrangements can be referred to the Ministry of Labour's hotline at 1-800-531-5551. Confidential help is available in 23 different languages, and this includes anonymous tips as well. The ministry will investigate any and all complaints to enforce our rules. We are the first government to conduct proactive inspections, and while out in the field, our

enforcement officers are also specifically asking about internships.

I also announced last December that we'll be doing a proactive employment enforcement blitz dealing with internships specifically starting in June.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, the amount of money the Liberal government wasted on cancelling two gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville could have paid for the Highway 7 expansion in my community nearly four times over, yet you pulled the plug on both plants with no forethought on the cost or the consequences.

Now, the number of infrastructure projects in the region of Waterloo and Guelph area are starting to pile up, and specifically, both Highway 85 and Highway 6 require infrastructure upgrades.

Minister, after wasting billions of dollars on the gas plant scandals and debt interest payments, what plans do you have to upgrade these roads and how much money will you invest?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for the friendly question. The irony is that we're spending \$14 billion a year on infrastructure, or 2% of our GDP. His federal party is spending \$73 million, or less than a fraction of 1% of GDP, one of the worst records ever.

The gas plants: I guess they buy them at garage sales, Mr. Speaker; they must get some discount, because they were the ones who first promised to cancel them. Those gas plants have been relocated, not cancelled, and are actually producing energy, because the people in Oakville and Mississauga asked for that. That money is out there working. I know we had to fulfill his promise for them, but maybe there are some gas plant discount sales at garage sales in Conestoga that I'm not aware of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the minister; I'll ask him a second time. Last weekend, our Premier said that she will not negotiate with the NDP on the budget. Then today we learned that the Liberal government will pack its budget full of reckless policies that will appease the anti-business stance of the NDP. So I guess the Premier is right, in fact: There is no room for negotiation when the plan is to give everything to the NDP.

It's sad that Ontario has a government that spends the majority of its time developing new ways to placate the NDP while ignoring critical infrastructure needs in municipalities like the region of Waterloo and the Guelph area.

Minister, forget about the garage sales. Will you just admit that you will do anything to cling to power, even if that means ignoring infrastructure investment and plunging the province into more debt just to appease the NDP?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interiection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Without comment. Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to encourage my friend opposite, Mr. Speaker, to read budgets. Readers are leaders. They would save a lot of time in here because he would know that there's already \$50 million in the budget for Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph and that we have made numerous commitments to complete that. We're quite excited about that.

Why can we do that? Because, in the last year they were in power in this province, they spent \$1.4 billion in total on schools and water. What does \$1.4 billion buy you? It certainly doesn't buy you Highway 7 or Highway 85. We are now spending 10 times what you spent on infrastructure so that we can build Highway 7. Maybe he can talk to his federal friend, because we just added four GO trains to Kitchener-Waterloo, and your federal cousins cancelled four Via trains.

So 10% spending of what we do—they cancel rapid transit projects. We add them. It's the garage-sale party—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. This morning, the Ontario Health Coalition released their report, entitled For Health or Wealth? The report details dozens and dozens of examples of extra billing, user fees and the sale of queue jumping for services—all of those in clear violation of the provincial and federal laws.

OHC researchers found that clinics were charging patients between \$50 and \$3,500 for OHIP-insured medical services. Is the minister concerned about those violations, and is she prepared to do anything about them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I will be absolutely clear on this. The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which we passed in 2004, very clearly states that there may be no charges for insured services. We hold true to that value. If there are examples of clinics charging patients, then that needs to be reported—and we act on that. The protection of our single-tier system is of paramount importance to us.

We are doing many things to transform our health care system. One of them is looking at establishing specialty clinics outside the walls of the hospital. I know the member opposite is familiar with the birthing centres that we've already opened—one in Ottawa, one in Toronto—to support people having their babies outside the walls of the hospital but in a safe environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? M^{me} France Gélinas: The Ontario Health Coalition

did a similar report in 2008. Some of the clinics that are

now charging higher fees were named in that 2008 report, and the minister did nothing.

User fees, extra billing and the up-selling of medically unnecessary tests and procedures not only harm patients, they harm our health care system. When someone needs cataract surgery or a colonoscopy, they should not have to decipher the legalities of the fees or, even worse, argue about them with the physician who is going to provide that care.

This government has talked a good game when it came to protecting our public health care system. But if they fail to prevent these violations, all their talk is for nothing. My question is simple: Why is the government moving more and more of these services to private clinics when it cannot assure Ontarians that public health care will be protected?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm afraid that the member opposite knows full well that the clinics that we're talking about opening are non-profit clinics. She also knows that we enforce the commitment to the future of medicare, and I would urge anyone who is being charged for medically insured services to report it.

I'm even going to give you the phone number: 1-888-662-6613. If anyone is being charged for services that are OHIP-covered, they should call that number and report it, and we will follow up. It's against the law. It is not tolerated.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, I know that MNR has a strong commitment to protecting the endangered species of our province, and that MNR has done some great work to protect habitats and help in the recovery of Ontario's species at risk.

I know that public stewardship efforts are integral to protecting endangered species in Ontario, and that your ministry encourages this through programs such as the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. I was happy to hear at the beginning of March that your ministry announced funding for a number of new projects to protect, preserve and restore our rich biodiversity and educate others.

Speaker, could the minister please tell the members of the Legislature about how his ministry helps protect endangered species through public stewardship projects such as the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for being such a strong advocate on this issue. Our party clearly stands in strong contrast with respect to the opposition on this.

The stewardship fund enables our partners to carry out a shared vision to protect species right across the province of Ontario. Since 2007, in fact, we've announced \$35 million in funding for 660 projects across the province. These local stewardship grants have restored more than 24,000 hectares of habitat, and have generated more than 2,100 jobs in doing so.

Projects such as these, through our ministry, help to provide protection for more than 150 species at risk, and help our ministry to ensure that Ontario's native species continue to contribute to our rich biodiversity. In fact, in the beginning of March, our ministry was honoured to receive a recognition award from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario for our efforts to re-establish a migratory bird, the piping plover, at Wasaga Beach. This recovery process was an excellent example of these stewardship programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad that your ministry is working hard to protect threatened species such as the piping plover, and that these efforts were recognized by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

I have a keen interest in preserving the environment and our province's rich biodiversity, and the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund sounds like a great way for the people of Ontario to get involved and assist in that goal. Through increased knowledge and awareness, we can all play a role to protect Ontario's natural spaces, and the plants and animals that live in them.

Could you please elaborate for the members of this House some of the projects that local groups have put into action to preserve our province's rich biodiversity?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, thanks to the member for the question. Earlier in March, our ministry announced that it would be supporting 103 different projects through our Species at Risk Stewardship Fund in the 2014-15 year. Up to \$5 million in funding will be allocated to 75 new projects and 28 ongoing multi-year projects.

The number of projects taken up by local community members in our province demonstrates the dedication that Ontarians have to protecting our natural resources. One of these important projects includes an initiative by the High Park Nature Centre. They will lead an innovative urban bat project to learn about the brown bat and northern long-eared bat, which are both species at risk. As well, the Canadian Wildlife Federation will work to better understand concerns with the American eel in the Ottawa River.

These are just two of the many projects we have taken on, and that local community groups have supported, that demonstrate our commitment to protecting biodiversity in Ontario.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the minister of health, children and youth services. Children's mental health agencies are exasperated. One in five young people in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

You've put two ministries together. I need to know which one.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry, Speaker. Children and Youth Services.

Children's mental health agencies are exasperated. One in five young people in Ontario needs mental health services. Demand is going up, and so are wait times. Among the many expert groups that have expressed concern, there is a consensus that we're facing a tsunami.

Although your government claims to be increasing services, kids' mental health services in Ontario have been in fact grappling with unprecedented cuts to their operational funding over the years, while residential services have not seen any investment at all.

As the minister responsible, what are you prepared to do to remedy the situation and help these kids in need?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the question with respect to children-and-youth mental health. As we know, the first three years of our Ontario comprehensive mental health strategy was focusing on children, and we have made a big difference in our communities over that period of time.

However, I believe the member opposite also recognizes that we recently released our Moving on Mental Health strategy, which directly will impact this sector and is in direct response to what we've been hearing from parents, because certainly we have been hearing from parents, from families, from youth and children. We've put together the strategy. I'll let you know a little bit more about the strategy in the supplementary. Certainly, our commitment to children's mental health remains strong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Kids need action, not more strategy and study. Mr. Speaker, I question this minister's commitment to the children and youth she's tasked with advocating for. I respectfully remind her that the agencies she's responsible for have had their budgets decrease steadily in relation to the inflation rate. Since 1992, this sector has seen a meagre 8% overall increase. As such, many could close doors and send kids to the hospital emergency department as a last resort, the most costly form of care.

Having wasted \$1 billion on gas plants and sent millions overseas in debt interest charges, will the minister identify where she will find the money to fund community-based children's mental health programs and services?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, with respect to children's mental health, we have in fact been increasing our investments in our communities. We have increased our mental health workers in schools in all our communities. We have added 770 new mental health workers in our communities. Our budget will grow to \$93 million for children's mental health.

Our Moving on Mental Health strategy will ensure that there's a lead agency, so that parents don't have to tell their stories over and over again. We'll bring communities together. We'll ensure that the system is easy for parents.

I have certainly been listening to parents and our youth, and we will continue to do that. We have been acting. It's not just a strategy; it's not just words. We are absolutely committed to children's mental health.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Education. I have been working with a group of Frenchlanguage parents in my riding. The Coalition de parents pour une école secondaire de quartier is furiously working towards securing space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto. There are 1,000 French-language students in desperate need of a high school that has the full facilities of a regular public or Catholic school. Currently in Toronto, Collège français, located downtown, can only house 399 students.

Est-ce que la ministre peut me dire pourquoi les élèves francophones de l'est de Toronto sont obligés de se déplacer jusqu'au centre-ville ou de transférer vers une école de langue anglaise pour faire leurs études secondaires?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think the answer here is that when you look at the investment we have made in new French-language schools—so people understand we're talking here about French-as-a-first-language school boards, the French public and French Catholic school boards—in fact, we have spent about \$1.3 billion, investing in new schools for the two French-language school boards over the past 10 years. There has been a significant investment in schools.

The way the process works is that we ask the school boards each year to submit their capital plans and to identify their priorities and to present a business case for each school for which they are requesting funding, and we look at those business cases. We have announced, in this recent announcement that we're making, a number of new French Catholic schools and French public schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Speaker, there are 1,000 Frenchlanguage students in the east end of Toronto, and that number is set to increase by 50% in the next three to four years. The minister needs to know that this is an urgent need, but it seems there is no plan in place to address it. In an effort to secure a high school in our neighbourhood, both public and Catholic school parents are working together in order to secure school space that currently exists in underutilized schools.

1130

Quand est-ce que la ministre va s'engager à rencontrer ces parents et à travailler avec eux pour trouver une école dans l'est de Toronto pour les élèves francophones du quartier?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I can only repeat that the process is—for the relevant school boards, the French public and

the French Catholic school boards—to identify the schools and present those in their capital plan. They are responsible for making those business cases.

But just to reassure the member, in fact, we have actually announced 12 new French-language schools in this year's capital plan. But the boards need to put forward the business cases, because we have actually provided capital for Viamonde, for example, the French public board that is responsible for Toronto. I was very delighted to announce new schools for both of the boards that work in the Toronto area. I just want to assure the member that we are flowing money to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PROPANE SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, in my riding of Oakville, we've got many businesses, both small and large, that sell and use propane on a daily basis. I've always understood the need for the careful use of propane and the safety requirements for propane handling in business. As a very volatile product that needs to be handled carefully to protect both workers and the public, it's important that there be comprehensive regulations and requirements around the storage and handling of this product, and we need robust certification requirements for businesses and individuals who work with the product.

Given the importance of safe propane handling, Minister, would you please share specifically how the government ensures that we have safe handling and storage of propane in Ontario?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Oakville for raising this very serious and important topic related to public safety. Proper handling and storage of propane is very important to maintaining and promoting safety in Ontario. That's why we continue to implement the recommendations from the Propane Safety Review Panel of 2008. We've already implemented measures such as annual inspections, propane transfer facilities, increased training requirements for employees, and risk and safety management plans as part of the licensing process. The implementation of these recommendations has gone a long way to enhance public safety in Ontario.

As the public sector regulator, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, known as the TSSA, is charged with overseeing the requirements and the business of handling propane. The ministry works very closely with the TSSA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the minister for informing the House today about the regulations and requirements that the government already has in place to ensure that the public safety in Ontario with regard to the storage and handling of propane is well handled. It's comforting to hear that we've taken action to ensure

public safety when dealing with a product as volatile as propane.

However, as the representative of a riding where there's a large number of small businesses and small business owners that use and sell propane, I've also heard concerns about the overregulation of businesses that need to use propane on a daily basis. It's important to me that sufficient public safety is maintained, but it's got to minimize the burden on business as well.

Minister, I've heard that your ministry is looking at specific measures to achieve such a result. Would you please inform the House what those new initiatives are that you currently have under consideration?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to inform the House about the proposals to enhance the propane safety regime in Ontario and the ones that are currently under consideration.

The proposals aim to improve safety while minimizing the burden on business by increasing efficiency and simplifying regulatory requirements. Proposals put forward for consideration range from a change in the inspection model to streamlining the approval process and simplifying training requirements. Some of these proposals arise from the recommendations received from the Propane Safety Review Panel that stated that the TSSA should inspect facilities annually until enough data has been gathered to develop alternative approaches to enforcement. Staff continue to accept and review public feedback on these proposals that look to relieve the regulatory burden on business while of course maintaining and enhancing public safety.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. As we know, Kalydeco is a new drug which appears to be a miracle treatment for some cystic fibrosis patients, and it gives hope to families with loved ones who are suffering from it.

In recent weeks, we have listened to the government's lame excuses for the delays in the approval of funding for Kalydeco for cystic fibrosis patients like Madi Vanstone, but it's not just Madi Vanstone. In my riding, I have been approached by three families who have been affected by cystic fibrosis and to whom Kalydeco represents hope—three families in my riding. Today I'm standing up for Maddie Phipps and Shannon and Matthew Bain, all of Georgetown; and Lindsay Shaw of Fergus—all of whom have cystic fibrosis and all of whom need Kalydeco.

My question to the minister is simple: Why are these families being forced to wait so long for her to announce funding for Kalydeco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to be very clear that Kalydeco is a drug that offers real hope for some people with cystic fibrosis. I know that. I think it's important, though, that we do negotiate for these drugs. We have worked on a pan-Canadian approach on this drug and 29 other drugs, and we have successfully reached agreement

with drug companies at prices that make us able to fund more drugs for more people.

For the opposition parties to suggest that we simply pay whatever price the pharmaceutical company says they want to charge us is simply irresponsible. It was not their practice when they were in office, and I can assure you that it's important that we negotiate the prices. I hate to say this, but some pharmaceutical companies are relying on this kind of public pressure so they can charge higher prices than they're charging in other jurisdictions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister knows we're standing up for our constituents, and she should understand that. It has now been more than a year since I first raised this issue with the minister, and we're still waiting.

I first raised the issue of Kalydeco with the minister in December 2012, in an email to her office. I spoke to her personally on February 20 last year, and again on March 20 last year. I raised the need for Kalydeco funding in the Legislature in debate a year ago tomorrow. I followed up in question period on May 2 last year, when I specifically asked the minister to commit to doing everything she could to expedite the process to approve this drug. While the government appears to be hiding behind a broken process, families worry and wait for more than a year.

When will the minister announce approval for funding for Kalydeco for Ontario cystic fibrosis patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's important that the member opposite acknowledge that the pharmaceutical company, Vertex, a US-based pharmaceutical company, was funded to the tune of \$75 million, plus an additional \$75 million promised, for the development of this drug by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in the United States. This research and development was funded by the public. I think when people donated to that cause, they expected that patients would benefit. I think the company, Vertex, needs to be held to account. They need to negotiate. We ought not to pay higher prices for this drug than in other jurisdictions.

If you really care about this, I urge you to contact the pharmaceutical company and say, "Take your responsibility to the people with cystic fibrosis seriously. Negotiate with us as Canadians. Canadian children"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests. Introduction of guests? Last call for introduction of guests. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I was hoping there would be some other introductions because I was trying to delay for one person to make it into the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So was I.

Mr. Norm Miller: I wanted to welcome to the Legislature, from my Bracebridge constituency office today, sitting on the members' west side, Karen Gauvreau and Yvonne Parkhill, both from my Bracebridge constituency office. Shortly to join them will be Marcia Morrison, who works in the Toronto office. They're down here in Toronto today to pay tribute to Marcia Morrison. This will be her last week after 11 years of working for me, including six years in the whip's office, where she looked after every whim of the PC caucus. I hope that members will stop around to my office, room 440—members of all parties who know Marcia and any of their staff, of course, or other folks here at the Legislature—to thank Marcia this afternoon between 4 and 6. Is Marcia here yet? She's not here. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do have patience for that kind of introduction, as opposed to a statement.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL ALLIANCE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my honour to rise today to pay tribute to the Middlesex Hospital Alliance, who, for the first time, achieved an award of accreditation with exemplary status, the highest rating a Canadian health care provider can receive.

Accreditation Canada is an independent, not-for-profit organization that sets standards for quality and safety in health care and accredits health organizations in Canada and around the world. Middlesex Hospital Alliance achieved a compliance rate of 98.7%. In addition, they met all 36 required organizational practices which an organization must have in place to enhance patient safety and minimize risk.

Middlesex Hospital Alliance also recently adopted the HUGO program, which is an important step that will result in further patient care and patient safety improvements. With HUGO, the hospital alliance is shifting from paper processes to electronic technology for ordering tests, prescribing medication and adding barcoding to make sure the right patient is receiving the right medication at the right time.

Allow me to offer my congratulations to the Middlesex Hospital Alliance, to their president and CEO Todd Stepanuik, and the entire team on these outstanding announcements that will enhance front-line services for hospital patients in my riding of Lambton–Kent– Middlesex. Congratulations.

ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity-Spadina is blessed with many cultural organizations that provide excellent arts programming and events for the public, often for free. These events not only entertain local families and

educate schoolchildren; they attract tourists and support our growing creative economy, providing good jobs.

Many of these events would not be possible without the welcome support of the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund. These Trinity-Spadina attractions include internationally known events like the Toronto International Film Festival and the International Festival of Authors at Harbourfront Centre; performances by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the National Ballet of Canada; and special exhibitions at the Royal Ontario Museum and the Bata Shoe Museum.

But Trinity-Spadina also nurtures smaller events that are growing in recognition and impact, like the Hot Docs and Reel Asian film festivals as well as the Redpath Waterfront Festival.

I would like to thank these organizations for their contributions to the cultural life and prosperity of Trinity-Spadina and the province as a whole.

BLIND HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Last weekend I was pleased to attend the opening ceremonies of the 2014 Courage Canada National Blind Hockey Tournament, held at the Mattamy Athletic Centre, the former Maple Leaf Gardens. The tournament featured 65 players from across Canada and the United States.

Courage Canada's national headquarters are in York South-Weston, because the organization was founded by Weston resident Mark DeMontis.

Courage Canada does fantastic work all across the country to grow the sport of blind hockey, working with district school boards' vision programs to inspire and empower boys and girls who are blind or visually impaired to learn to skate and try blind hockey.

Since 2008, Mark DeMontis, who is legally blind himself, has worked very hard to establish a national tournament, and has run more than 75 skating field trips for more than 325 boys and girls from Halifax to Victoria.

I am very pleased to see that the province of Ontario is supporting the efforts of Courage Canada, with the Ontario Trillium Foundation granting almost \$17,000 to support the tournament. This funding has helped Courage Canada pay for adaptive pucks, ice rentals, and accommodations for the tournament.

The tournament has been a great success and has helped Courage Canada promote and broaden access to, and improve the quality of, active living programs for blind and visually impaired youth.

I want to congratulate them, Mr. Speaker. It's a great organization.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Gila Martow: The Canadian Automobile Association, also known to most of us as the CAA, is the leading advocate for overall road safety in Ontario. As CAA's South Central Ontario club is located in my riding

of Thornhill, I wish to acknowledge the launch of this year's Worst Roads campaign, and I look forward to the Best Roads campaign after they're all fixed.

CAA actively represents its members on numerous issues ranging from distracted driving to cycling and school safety. One key area that CAA advocates on is road infrastructure. Road users, drivers, cyclists and, yes, pedestrians know that our climate is a factor in creating potholes and in deteriorating our roads. CAA's campaign provides Ontarians with an opportunity to nominate the road they feel is best deserving of the Worst Road title.

In 2013, Dufferin Street in Toronto was named Ontario's Worst Road for the second consecutive year. In fact, five of the top 10 roads last year were located in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

The campaign results are instrumental in assisting municipal and provincial representatives to understand which areas of Ontario need to be prioritized and targeted. For over a decade, improvements have been made because of CAA's efforts, including the resurfacing and revitalization of Steeles Avenue that borders Toronto, York region, and, yes, my riding of Thornhill. The issue is serious, and the campaign garners considerable attention and actually works.

Congratulations to CAA for its continuous efforts to provide a forum for road users and help inform government. I, along with many Ontarians, will make my submission to the Worst Roads campaign, and I thank them for their ongoing leadership.

FUNDRAISING DINNER

Mr. Paul Miller: This Thursday, March 27, the Hamilton and District Labour Council will host its fourth annual United Way fundraising dinner. Tickets are sold primarily to local unions and their members.

The contributions of our local unions are noted on the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton website, where it states: "We proudly recognize the local members of the ... unions who actively supported United Way through their partnership on workplace campaigns at unionized workplaces across our community. On behalf of United Way Burlington and Greater Hamilton, and the Hamilton and District Labour Council, thank you for your generosity and commitment."

This event was the initiative of Mary Long, president of the Hamilton and District Labour Council. Although it takes many hands to have successful events like this, I know that recipients of the funds raised want to say a special thanks to her.

The event should raise around \$10,000 on Thursday, and the labour council guarantees that as a minimum donation.

1510

The beauty of this event is that it truly lets folks connect without long speeches. The only speakers are the CEO of the United Way and Mary herself.

On behalf of our Hamilton community, I want to extend our sincere thanks for the wonderful work of these two extraordinary Hamilton organizations.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to stand today and speak about Bill 179, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Government Services on this broad-ranging and important piece of legislation. I'm also pleased that my first private member's bill, the Transparency in Members' Expenses Act, was incorporated into the bill.

I believe that, as legislators, we must lead the way and lead by example. Bill 179 provides us with that opportunity. If passed, this bill will strengthen political accountability, enhance oversight and increase transparency in the government and the broader public sector.

It will also extend the role of the Ontario Ombudsman to include municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities. It will establish a patient Ombudsman for public hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access centres, and it will give the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth further authority to investigate matters relating to children and youth involved in the child protection system.

Bill 179 is part of Premier Wynne's commitment to lead the most open and transparent government in the country. The Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, has described Bill 179 as a historical change, one that has been 35 years in the making.

Bill 179 is bold legislation. It can and should be supported by all members of this Legislature. It's a bill that we can all be proud to pass to ensure that, as members, we lead by example.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Todd Smith: We have a tradition in this country of politics stopping at the water's edge, particularly as this applies to the relationships between our provincial and federal governments. When Canadian Prime Ministers go abroad, Premiers have generally respected that foreign affairs and its conduct are the purview of the federal government, and that Prime Ministers, when they're abroad, are representing Canada and ought to be absent from the political conversation in Canada.

It was disgraceful that the current Premier sought to break this tradition this weekend in order to score some cheap political points before a braying crowd of Liberal insiders. The Prime Minister was the first leader of a G7 nation to visit Ukraine amidst the current turmoil in that country. Canada's stance against Russian aggression and tyranny is the strongest of our allies.

With the Prime Minister overseas, the Premier took her chance at the Liberal convention last weekend to attack him. It used to be that the Premier of Ontario was the second most powerful political office in the country, a status that we've seen decline under the current Premier and her predecessor.

The Premier of Ontario had a diplomatic duty to the country not to play cheap political tricks to undermine the Prime Minister while they were engaged in the sensitive work of foreign affairs. Rather than stand with the Prime Minister this weekend as he supported the people of Ukraine, the Premier chose to try and score political points.

I join my PC caucus colleagues in supporting Canada's efforts to defend Ukraine and Ukrainians in their time of need.

The Premier likes to ask what leadership is. If she can't practise it and she doesn't know, then she'll never be what Ontario needs.

INCOME INEOUALITY

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to congratulate all the participants in a town hall we had last Thursday on income inequality and fighting poverty. The participants included the host, Pastor Rick Zelinsky from the Salvation Army church at Yonge and Eglinton, and we even had an incredible visit from the Anglican archbishop of Toronto, Colin Johnson, who spoke about income inequality.

We had participation from the Fairlawn Avenue United Church, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto, St. Clement's Anglican Church and Eglinton St. George's United Church, and we also had an amazing performance by Jaydahmann—Andrew Cox—and Krystle Chance, who sang Sam Cooke's famous song "A Change is Gonna Come."

We had an incredible event where community leaders from North York Community House, North York Harvest Food Bank, Art Starts and Virginia Mills from Voices for a Just Society came together to raise awareness about the need to fight income inequality and to do something about reducing the root causes of poverty in this great province. Thanks to all of them for taking time to participate in dealing with income inequality.

DAVID EULER

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It gives me great personal pleasure to stand today to pay tribute to a friend, David Euler, who will be recognized as a companion of the order of the Professional Engineers Ontario on April 28 in Niagara Falls.

We hired David at the city of North Bay, where he has earned the respect of his colleagues throughout the years for wonderful contributions to the profession in Ontario and across Canada, through three decades of active involvement.

He played a leading role in all of the chapter's major initiatives, including its largest, the annual Engineers' Day symposium, for which he developed a planning tool in 2002 that is still used by the organizers today.

As the organization's council chair, he helped move forward significant changes to the Professional Engineers Act, measures to increase labour mobility for engineering licence holders across Canada and a new governance model for Engineers Canada. He is now the PEO's appointee to their board.

He now helps steer development of PEO's Ontario Centre for Engineering and Public Policy as vice-chair of

its advisory board.

David epitomizes dedication to his profession, and he is a credit to it, the city of North Bay and his family as well.

On behalf of all residents of Nipissing, I congratulate David on his well-deserved honour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member from Welland on a point of order.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I actually wanted to introduce a motion. Are we at that opportunity? We're not at motions yet?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levae): Just by way of explanation: You do not introduce motions; the government introduces motions. You can seek unanimous consent.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That's exactly what I want to do. The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I seek unanimous consent that, after the completion of the NDP leadoff speech on Bill 177, the question be put on the motion for second reading of the bill without further debate and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Rills

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day / Loi proclamant le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II.

An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois de janvier Mois du patrimoine tamoul.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 25, 2014, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BOB MACKIE ACT, 2014 LOI BOB MACKIE DE 2014

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to amend the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act / Projet de loi 180, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la planification et l'aménagement de l'escarpement du Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, the bill, the Bob Mackie Act, 2014, amends the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act to provide that, for the purposes of the Niagara Escarpment plan, the permitted use described as "agricultural operation" is deemed to include the operation of an archery range and any other incidental uses or facilities.

I look forward to support of this bill in honour of Bob Mackie.

REDUCING GRIDLOCK AND IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À RÉDUIRE L'ENGORGEMENT ROUTIER ET À AMÉLIORER L'ÉCOULEMENT DE LA CIRCULATION

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management / Projet de loi 181, Loi exigeant la constitution d'un comité consultatif pour formuler des recommandations au ministre des Transports et au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne l'amélioration de la gestion des incidents de la route.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Basically, the bill requires the ministers mentioned and the commissioner of the OPP to establish an advisory committee because of all the incidents we're seeing on our highways, including this morning, where the 401 was blocked to the east of Toronto.

We want to provide public education programs to improve driver behaviour in circumstances involving highway incidents, reduce the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents, and to clear highways after the occurrence of these types of incidents, providing timely and accurate information about highway incidents to drivers, and enhancing the safety and security of Ontario's highways.

Within 60 days after receiving the advisory committee's report, each minister must inform the assembly of the recommendations that he or she will implement.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I support this petition and have affixed my name to it.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai cette pétition qui nous vient des gens de l'est de Toronto.

« Étant donné que le paragraphe 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés garantit l'accès à une éducation de langue française financée par les fonds publics;

« Étant donné que plus de 1000 élèves fréquentent actuellement les écoles élémentaires francophones situées dans le secteur Toronto-Est...;

« Étant donné qu'il a été documenté que les enfants délaissent le système d'éducation francophone pour intégrer des systèmes anglophones entre la 8° et la 9° année d'études pour des raisons d'inaccessibilité à l'école secondaire...;

« Étant donné que le gouvernement de l'Ontario a reconnu, en février 2007, qu'il y a pénurie importante d'écoles francophones dans le grand Toronto...;

« Étant donné que le ministère de l'Éducation a confirmé que tous et toutes bénéficient de l'utilisation optimale des biens immobiliers des conseils scolaires pour soutenir une éducation financée par les fonds publics...;

« Étant donné que devant l'impossibilité de trouver un édifice ou un terrain sur le territoire de Toronto-Est, un conseil scolaire a résolu de construire une école secondaire francophone à Scarborough, loin du quartier où se trouve la plus importante concentration d'élèves francophones, une option qui est rejetée par la vaste majorité des familles concernées...;

« Étant donné que parents et élèves des écoles francophones catholiques et publiques du quartier sont prêts à partager ensemble ou avec un conseil scolaire anglophone une école actuellement sous-utilisée du quartier... »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative « que le ministre de l'Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7^e à la 12^e année d'études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n'auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d'une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

J'appuie la pétition. Je vais y signer mon nom et je demande à la page Bani de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the recently created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

'That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Jane

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and, there has been a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia:

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer's;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but in 2013 they have yet to make good on their promise; 1530

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day adjusted for acuity level and case mix;

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard of four hours:

'(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC

home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

(5) The province must stop closing continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical

conditions to long-term-care homes."

I affix my signature and hand this to page Caroline.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"For a local French secondary school (grades 7-12).

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to a publicly

funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in Toronto East (Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York and Leslieville-'neighbourhood'), and the numbers continue to grow, yet there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) in the neighbourhood, rather, many students need to travel two hours every day to attend their 'local' secondary school while several English schools in the neighbourhood sit half-empty as there are no requirements or incentives for the boards that own the half-empty schools to release them to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 8 and 9 because of the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools and it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and the commissioner of French-language services stated in his report back in June 2011 that ' ... time is running out to address the very serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto,' yet to date, not a single secondary school has been opened in our neighbourhood; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of the Frenchlanguage and English-language students, and yet, to this day, has failed to address the situation of unused surplus school properties and to change Ontario regulation 444/98 to support more effective and efficient use of real estate: and

"Whereas as a result of their inability to locate a building or piece of land in Toronto East, one school board's solution is to build a French secondary school in Scarborough, far from the neighbourhood where the biggest concentration of French students reside, an option that is rejected by the vast majority of families that would be affected by this decision as it will merely perpetuate the problems presently faced by these children; and

"Whereas parents and students both from French Catholic and French public elementary schools in the neighbourhood are prepared to share with each other or with an English school board, an existing underutilized school in the neighbourhood, and in so doing, find common ground and mutual benefits, across all language school systems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education intervene to locate an underutilized secondary school building in the neighbourhood of Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York and Leslieville that may be sold to or shared with both French school boards (public and Catholic) so that each may open their respective French secondary school (grades 7 to 12) by September 2014 and so that French students no longer must choose between travelling great distances to attend a French secondary school or giving up their French education in favour of a local English school and so that they may have the same benefit as their English counterparts, the right to attend a local secondary school in their neighbourhood."

I'm in agreement with this petition. I will affix my

signature and give it to page Callista.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the

complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and nonprofit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I approve of this petition, sign my name to it and give it to page Zohaib.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the residents of Walden. They include Mr. Darwin Brunne as well as the women from the women's institute on Penage Road. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already

have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Urooj to bring it to the Clerk.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Gas Tax Increase.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government is considering a 10-centsper-litre increase on the provincial gas tax to fund mass transit; and

"Whereas the government's alternative is to raise the gas tax five cents per litre and increase the harmonized sales tax by 0.5%; and

"Whereas many people in rural Ontario need to drive to get to and from work or school or to get groceries and other essentials and do not have the option of taking mass transit: and

"Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase of the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families; and

"Whereas the increase in the gas tax would cost the average Ontario household \$260 a year; and

"Whereas the government should cut waste to fund mass transit before taxing Ontarians;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reduce waste and fund mass transit through methods that do not place an unnecessary financial burden on the people of Ontario, especially those who must drive to and from work or school."

I sign my name to it and hand it to page Eli.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes, actually, from the Durham region. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes" and hospitals; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes" and one of two without oversight of hospitals; 1540

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes" and hospitals "in order to protect our most vulnerable" citizens.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Caroline to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FIGHTING FRAUD AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 17, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens / Projet de loi 171, Loi concernant les réformes du système d'assurance et le privilège des réparateurs et des entreposeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 171 this afternoon. This bill is a continuation of a century-long drama when it comes to auto insurance in Ontario. It seems that whenever an election is near, auto insurance becomes a trendy concern, and we come out with some sort of legislation. That has resulted in lots of bureaucracy and lots of legislation piled on top of one another. It's making the system too complicated and, in the end, very costly. In fact, we now have the highest auto insurance rates in our country.

We all recall that last year at budget time, we had the 15%-reduction promise by this government, propped up by the NDP, in order to prevent an election. But we've said for a long time that a unilateral cut to insurance rates without cost savings in the system would lead to unintended and negative consequences, and we're seeing evidence of this now on two fronts.

Number one, availability of insurance: Late last year, State Farm sold its property and casualty business in Canada. They cited the Ontario auto insurance market as the key reason for this. We have a historical example we could have learned from. New Jersey promised to cut rates by 15% in 1998. Numerous companies left the marketplace at the time, making auto insurance very difficult to obtain. While rates did come down 15% over two years, lack of availability then led to a 27% spike in insurance premiums two years later.

Further, we're starting to hear from various constituency offices that people with a few blemishes on their record are being dropped by their insurance carriers. Insurance carriers cannot drop a client during their policy but can refuse to renew a policy.

The second problem we're seeing from this Liberal-NDP alliance is that bad drivers are getting the biggest discounts. In the most recent rate filings in January, the biggest winners were those insured by non-standard insurance. These companies insure the worst drivers, including those with multiple accidents.

I'd like to address some specifics of Bill 171. First of all, I'd like to talk about the changes in the dispute resolution process

A year and a half ago, when the NDP were talking about territorial ratings for premiums, and the government wasn't even talking about auto insurance, it was our party that recognized there were ongoing issues with the dispute resolution mechanism. The PC Party was the first to start talking about the issues with dispute resolution, and in fact, we addressed that in our auto insurance action plan.

The fact that we have 15 white papers on file, on issues ranging from social assistance, education, health care and post-secondary education to energy, Speaker, demonstrates that we're the only party actually concerned with putting some thought into the difficult issues our province has faced. So that is why we brought up the dispute resolution mechanism before any other party did. By taking the time to speak with accident victims and various other stakeholders, it became clear early on that this aspect of the system was terribly broken. Then, when

the Auditor General released his annual report in 2011, the independent evidence supported what we were hearing. In a scathing report, the Auditor General noted that not only was the regulator, FSCO, not meeting its legislated customer service standards; it wasn't even close.

As set out in the Insurance Act, mediation is supposed to be completed within 60 days. So if someone gets in an accident and feels their insurance company is shortchanging them, they can initiate a dispute. The first step of that dispute is to take part in a FSCO-administered mediation process. It is the hope of this process that the insurer and the claimant can agree to some type of mutually agreeable settlement in order to avoid going to the courts or to FSCO-administered arbitration. The initial process is supposed to be completed within 60 days. What the Auditor General noted in 2011 is that, due to substantial demand for mediation services, FSCO only had a 5% compliance within this timeline; 95% of the cases were not being resolved within 60 days. In fact, most applications at the time were being dealt with 10 to 12 months after the initial filings. This has led to a case backlog of more than 36,000 cases. That's a real problem that requires practical solutions from the government.

Did the NDP choose to talk about this? No. We talked about it, and continued to bring up this issue in the Legislature. Finally, after months of this, the Liberals did agree to review the dispute resolution process. They appointed Justice Cunningham to review the system and provide recommendations. Arguably, the biggest change that Bill 171 makes is to move the dispute resolution system out of FSCO's hands and into the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General. This is as per the recommendation from Justice Cunningham.

We don't really object to this. The Attorney General's office does employ individuals who have backgrounds in dispute settlement and, therefore, the skills necessary to conduct mediations adequately. However, Bill 171 is being introduced for the purpose of reducing costs, so the government can deliver premium reductions. But we're not there yet. It's worth noting that insurance regulator FSCO is industry-financed, so moving any administrative function out of FSCO will reduce costs that industry have to pay FSCO. Therefore, it's conceivable the premiums could come down slightly. However, costs aren't really reduced at all. Now, rather than paying for the dispute resolution system through auto insurance premiums, Ontarians will pay for it through their taxes. If the goal of the bill is to reduce costs, this is nothing more than a shell game.

One area that I think this bill falls short on is that it makes no mention of the role of private mediation services. Back when FSCO was experiencing its highest backlog of mediation cases, they contracted out to private mediation services to help clear the backlog. Why isn't it an alternative? We recommended in our insurance action plan to open up the system to private mediations. Providing choice and expediting the mediation process has cost-saving implications. One change that I'm con-

cerned about is eliminating the option to pursue a dispute in court following mediation. As it stands now, once a dispute moves through the mediation stage without resolution, the claimant and the insurer will get together with respective legal counsel and decide whether to take the case to an arbitrator or the courts. Bill 171 eliminates the option of the courts. This is in line with Justice Cunningham's recommendations.

While a number of disputes arise that are strictly nofault and would be best served by going through an arbitrator, some cases have both a no-fault and a tort component.

1550

Removing this option, therefore, has a number of implications:

- (1) It removes the inherent fairness of allowing a local judge to decide an issue in dispute.
- (2) It removes the right to sue for extra contractual damages, leaving such issues strictly in the purview of a tribunal not authorized to deal with equities of the situation.
- (3) It causes more rather than less costs by forcing insurers and claimants to fight battles on two fronts rather than one on every case.
- (4) Ultimately, it will reduce rather than enhance opportunities to access justice.
- (5) Finally—Speaker, I'd like to touch on the cost aspect for one moment. This bill proposes that instead of dealing with a dispute with both the tort and no-fault components, people now have to pursue a dispute on several fronts, as I mentioned. That means two separate files, two separate forums of pursuing the dispute and two separate decisions to be made with respect to the dispute.

How can this possibly be more cost-effective and efficient than the current system? It simply cannot be. The current practice of combining those disputes under one suit makes more practical and more common sense. It's worth noting that lawyers on both sides of the dispute agree to this point. Trial lawyers who represent claimants and defendant lawyers who represent insurance companies both recognize that this change is not in the best interest of the system. That's a rarity in itself.

Lastly on this point, nowhere does this bill attempt to address the high demand for dispute resolution services. In his 2011 report, the Auditor General noted that the demand for dispute resolution services increased by 135% from 2006 to 2011. Justice Cunningham also made mention of this issue in his report.

I do want to talk about fraud. The minister himself, during his press conference, talked a lot about reducing fraud and using the PCs' idea from the last election of creating a task force of crown attorneys from the Attorney General's office to tackle fraud. We haven't seen any action on it yet, other than that he wants to create a 1-800 number, but we appreciate the direction.

The small part of the bill that deals with fraud deals with the licensing of health care clinics. Fraudulent health clinics in the GTA have been cited as one of the

key drivers of fraud-related costs in the system. Often these clinics are nothing more than fronts for a larger fraud ring. Back in August 2012, Ontario police arrested 65 people who were involved in such a fraud ring. It was quite a sophisticated crime ring. We need to recognize that a lot of fraud is organized.

In a report from KPMG, fraud is estimated to range between \$768 million to \$1.56 billion. When you average out that cost across Ontario, that's either \$116 or \$236

per premium paid.

In the GTA alone, the problem is much more severe. In the anti-fraud task force report released a year and a half ago, it was noted that 83% of the increase in accident benefit costs in Ontario between 2006 and 2010 occurred here in the GTA. This is over a period of time in which he MTO reported significant decreases in the number of reported vehicle accidents. Addressing this will reduce costs in the system that will benefit all Ontarians.

So, Speaker, what does Bill 171 provide in the way of health clinics? Essentially, the government wants to create a new licensing machine to be administered by FSCO that would pertain to the business practices of health clinics that bill insurance. Many health clinics treat clients for both non-auto and auto-related accidents. Fraud occurs typically on the auto side of things because the statutory benefits are richer than other insurance plans

When we consider a clinic that must now get a licence to bill insurers, it becomes more burdensome to manage than all other aspects of the business. We don't disagree with the intent of the business. We don't disagree with the intent of the measure, but I'm concerned we're going to have another level of bureaucracy that harms small businesses and kills jobs. Perhaps we can discuss this aspect more at committee.

I want to contrast Bill 171 with our PC auto insurance plan for a moment and reiterate some of the dangers that we are going to see in this legislation with regard to auto insurance and the potential poor outcomes that may occur because of it.

The first part of our plan is to encourage competition and reduce excess bureaucracy. We'd like to adopt a file-and-use rate-setting process to allow companies to lower prices quicker, ensure greater market competitiveness and encourage a wider range of discount offerings for Ontario drivers. This file-and-use system would allow technology to enter our marketplace quicker. It could be of great benefit to seniors and also our new drivers in the province, whether they be young or they be new immigrants, who have got driver's licences so that we can get a true, accurate mechanic of how they're performing.

The current system of filing and waiting for a response from FSCO to go ahead with your rate increase inhibits the ability for us to utilize technology at its fullest. Right now, for an insurance company to raise or lower their rates, they have to create a report that is thousands of pages long, including all their mathematics and stats, using actuarial science to prove why their rate increase is a plus or a negative. It can somehow take between nine

months and a year to get a rate change in this province. If you want to be competitive and have lower rates, under this current system, it takes an insurance company up to a year to actually compete and lower rates. What we're saying here is that a file-and-use system would allow the auto insurance industry to compete. We would probably see State Farm remain in the marketplace. We might even see Progressive come back to the marketplace: Welcome back, Flo. We'd have more insurers competing for our business. That's what we want to see in this province.

The second point that we like to talk about, which I talked about in depth earlier, is the dispute resolution process. In the event of a claims dispute, the PC Party wants to allow people to opt for private mediations. This way, it will reduce wait times and costs associated with waiting with the government-appointed mediator. It will happen quicker. People will either come to an agreement sooner or it will be off to the courts or off to an arbitrator quicker. The sooner we can get somebody to get their agreement in place with the insurers, the sooner they can be treated, the sooner they can get healthier, the sooner they can get back to work and get back to a normal life. Unfortunately, some disputes last so long that a temporary injury, because it's not getting the necessary treatment, can become a permanent injury, and it then adds to the cost of the system.

We also want to establish a true, independent, peerreviewed medical assessment system. We want standardized assessment procedures that require multiple assessments performed by medical professionals. This is another use that we could use FSCO for.

The third point we want in the PC auto insurance plan is for Ontario to combat fraud. As mentioned by the Minister of Finance, he wants to institute a special fraud unit. Despite previously discounting the idea, the government has now decided to change their mind because now they are realizing that you have to deal with fraud. The PC Party has been right from day one. We want to establish a special unit of the crown attorney's office to investigate and prosecute fraud. We agree with you on that fraud unit. It's our idea; we'll let you have it. We've got a whole myriad of ideas to help fix this province. You're welcome to all of them. We'll support you, but let's get that fraud unit created.

The last point we make in our PC auto insurance plan is increased accountability. We need a fair, well-functioning marketplace for auto insurance. We want to make sure the senior insurer executives are personally and financially liable for the conduct of their companies. I think what has happened over the years is there's no trust anymore between the insurance companies and the people who are paying the premiums. There's some way that we need to re-establish that trust, and one of these ways is to make the senior executives accountable.

Let me summarize: A 15% cut was demanded by the NDP within a year. The Liberals said, "Okay, we'll do it within two years, maybe." The NDP said, "That's okay," so we've seen rate cuts for bad drivers of 15%, and then people in rural ridings seeing their rates go up 40%.

I want to draw your attention to the words of Philip Howell, the CEO of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, at the Standing Committee on General Government on April 15, 2013. He said, "Any move that required all companies to cut rates I think would be a very dangerous move. As well as that, I think you would find situations where people would just have less access to insurance and perhaps be forced into the" Facility Association, as he called it, "paying much higher rates than they currently are." Forewarned by the chief regulator of our province on insurance—but instead, the discount was passed in the last budget. He warned us. You didn't listen.

1600

After this deal last year, the government now has to search for those cost savings in the system. The bottom line is this bill doesn't deliver any significant cost savings at all. Instead, it has been put forward, like many other bills from this government, more as a way to make it seem like they are a government in action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to know, to start off on Bill 171, exactly how much consultation did they have with the victims of accidents? Take a look at the prejudgment interest that they're talking about, which really has nothing to do with fraud. Bill 171 would change a 30-year-old rule that has been so important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the person's insurance company delays paying those basic damages. Basically, it ensures timely payment for pain and suffering and damages by insurance companies to innocent victims.

Currently, insurance companies are required to pay 5% interest. Somebody who is owed \$50,000 will get paid \$7,500 in interest. It's not a lot of money, but it's a help. But by delaying this, and taking it to 1.5%—just last year, the insurance companies made 4% on their money in investment. Now, if you say it's going to go to 1.3%, they're able to make a profit of 2.7% on their money every year that they put off settling with the victim. Here you have the victim, who is hoping to get a settlement for their pain, their suffering, maybe their medical bills, and what they're doing is, they're saying, "Well, why would we pay out 5%? We'll take it down to 1.3%, and we'll sit there and make 2.7% on our money." Instead of helping the victims and making it get to a point where they will get it resolved, they just sit on their money and make more money.

I don't believe this is what we should be doing, and by the look of this bill, we certainly have not talked to the victims.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 171. I listened attentively to the member from Nipissing and his remarks this afternoon. He talked about the bill not addressing dispute resolution. Let me remind the

member opposite: Sections 280, 281, 282 and 283 specifically deal with this resolution of dispute. I just want to remind the member of those sections of the bill.

Bill 171 does help to review dispute resolution when it comes to car insurance and potential fraud. We heard extensively during our public consultation process about the concerns dealing with disputes, dealing with the insurance company—as well as the victim being involved in an accident. When the final report came before the ministry—it was delivered this year on February 18—it made 28 recommendations. The proposed Bill 171 implements a number of these recommendations.

If passed, it would create a framework for the dispute resolution system by moving the responsibility to an existing tribunal administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Licence Appeal Tribunal, with the objective of establishing a more expedient and cost-effective system, because we heard from the witnesses at our committee who expressed concern about how long it takes to resolve some of the disputes.

Furthermore, it also talks about removing the frustration for the consumer. We heard numerous times about when the consumer, who happened to be the victim or had been involved with a car accident, was taking too long to resolve their dispute. This proposed legislation, if passed, will address those concerns.

I look forward to hearing more conversations about the second reading on this proposed bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act.

To begin with, our caucus will in fact support this particular bill, but there need to be some very serious amendments made in committee. I think you'll find that lawyers on both sides support most of the bill, but they do have some reservations, as do medical and rehabilitation professionals.

We've said from the very beginning that the NDP demand for a 15% auto insurance premium reduction would have unintended and negative consequences. It was cited earlier by our member from Nipissing that State Farm, a company well known throughout Canada, recently decided that they were going to leave Canada. They used to hold a significant 11% of the auto insurance market in Ontario, but they have left, citing the Ontario auto insurance market as their primary reason.

Another thing is that we're getting lots of calls in my constituency office telling us that more and more drivers are being dropped by their insurance carriers as they—"they" being the insurance carriers—try to rid their books of even the most moderate of risks. To me, that is dangerous, because when insurance becomes scarcer, not only will it leave people frustrated and without coverage, but it will also lead to major increases in premiums. I call that simply supply and demand.

Again, perhaps the most serious implication of this illconceived policy is that the worst drivers in Ontario are in fact the biggest winners when it comes to rate reductions. Very quickly: In the most recent premium filings, three companies that write policies solely for people with drunk driving convictions and multiple accidents had the biggest reductions: 15%, 14.5% and 8.7%.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The mem-

ber for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Speaker. Just to carry

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No, I'm sorry. You already spoke.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Sorry, Speaker, that was my mistake. I thought we could do more than one hit around the debate. It's a good clarification piece to know for the future.

We're talking about the dispute process. One of the major changes that has happened here is now we have two places that accident victims, who have been involved in an unfortunate situation where they were injured, can use. That's a problematic situation, because what happens is you have to pay two lawyers. Not a lot of accident victims will be able to afford to seek justice in that situation.

We certainly want to make sure that insurance premiums are affordable for Ontarians. That's one of the priorities we've heard from Ontarians, that affordability of insurance costs is something on their minds. We did ask this government to reduce the rates by 15%.

This bill is supposed to address some of the issues about fraud, but there are a lot of problems in this bill.

We are going to make sure that this bill does go to committee, because there's a lot of work—tons of work—that needs to be done with that word that has been thrown loosely in there about helping consumers with the fraud piece. There needs to be better tightening up, as the member from Niagara Falls mentioned, about the interest rate and the fact that they're looking at reducing that from 5% to 1.3%, I think it is.

Where is the incentive for the party to pay out to accident victims for their injuries in a timely fashion, when you're going to reduce that penalty to an incentive for them to keep that money in their bank, because they're not going to be suffering financially? We all know that sometimes where it hurts is in your back pocket. By looking at that in committee—we really have some serious concerns about that as well.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Niagara Falls, Scarborough—Agincourt, Chatham—Kent—Essex, and London—Fanshawe.

I know we watch TV once in a while and we see the commercials that 15 minutes gets you a 15% reduction in

your insurance, but it's not going to happen in 15 minutes here. We're going to need a little bit more work to achieve that 15% reduction; there's a lot more work.

As I said earlier, State Farm sold its property and casualty business in Canada; Progressive is gone. New Jersey promised to cut rates by 15% in 1998. Again, numerous companies left the market at that time, making auto insurance very difficult to obtain. So while they did achieve the 15% reduction over two years, the lack of availability led to a 27% spike in premiums two years later.

In summary, we have four action points from the PC Party. The government is listening to part of one. If they implement all four, we can guarantee them that we'll have a better product for all Ontarians, a competitive marketplace, and rates will go down through competition. Then we won't have to be doing this every two years. Hopefully, they will get together, support this bill, and support the rest of our ideas to create a system that provides better outcomes for everyone in Ontario.

I am looking forward to this bill coming to committee so we can hear from all sides of this issue and have very comprehensive hearings and consultations with all of the people that will be affected by this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good afternoon, Speaker. I rise today to share my thoughts on government bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act.

To begin with, I find the naming of this bill a little bit tongue-in-cheek. The title claims the very noble intention of fighting fraud and reducing auto insurance premiums, but the reality of this bill is something far different.

New Democrats negotiated with this government to deliver a 15% premium reduction for families to help relieve the financial pressures of chronic premium increases, yet this government has not lived up to that promise. Instead, what we are seeing with this bill is one more gift to huge insurance companies at the expense of accident victims and all auto insurance policyholders.

While no one doubts that there is fraud in the insurance system and that fraud makes it harder to reduce premiums—before I became a member of the provincial Parliament, I worked in the industry insurance, and I know exactly how harmful fraudulent claims can be. It robs those who have genuinely been hurt in an accident and does a huge injustice to those seeking a fair premium.

If we truly want to combat insurance fraud, there needs to be a better way, and, quite frankly, this bill does not accomplish that at all. What it does accomplish is to effectively deny accident victims access to the court system. This bill assumes that all accident victims seeking recompense are fraudulent, or so it appears, by denying access to the justice system, which for me is very problematic.

I understand that this government will argue that Justice Cunningham's final report on the dispute resolution system is the reason behind this bill, but we know it is a deliberate misrepresentation of the report, geared to appease corporations and probably friendly Liberal donors.

This kind of behaviour is not new for this government. Time and time again, we have seen them use their power and privilege to benefit their friends and, in so doing, themselves. It was just earlier this year that this government prepared to fast-track legislation for their powerful allies. Their attempt to subvert the democratic process and the will of this Legislature in order to deliver a win for their friends has become a recurring theme for this government. Thankfully, we stopped them then, and I hope we can stop them again, because this bill has serious flaws that will directly impact thousands of accident victims and policyholders across this province. It will impact those in our own communities, and we need to make sure people understand what is at stake here.

The government would have you believe that this bill is meant to introduce a cost savings to the insurance industry. However, I want everyone to be clear that what is actually happening is that this government is proposing to wipe out all recourse to an independent judicial system that is meant to safeguard the fundamental rights of our citizens and to replace it with a tribunal. Does that sound like justice to you, Speaker? I know it doesn't look anything like the kind of justice I would expect if it was my family or any family in my riding of London–Fanshawe, or any family in Ontario.

I'm not even sure how you can explain this to every-day people. If you have to really explain it, you might have to say it this way: "I voted to subvert your rights to justice so that the insurance companies, who are making record profits, would not have to be subjected to our court system." That's kind of what you'd have to say to them if you translate it into plain English for them. It does not roll off your tongue very well, does it, Speaker? I encourage every member here to think about how they will explain their support for this bill in its current form. This bill needs to be sent to committee so that we can do the necessary work on it to ensure that the people of this province are protected.

Recently, we have seen substantial cuts to the statutory auto insurance benefits that netted the insurance companies more than \$2 billion in savings. These proposed changes are on top of that \$2-billion savings. By virtue of this bill, it would appear as though the Liberal government is far more concerned with improving profit lines in an industry that has already seen a \$2-billion boom than it is with ensuring that every citizen of this province has access to a fair and equitable justice system, along with reasonable insurance rates.

Another important issue with this bill is how it changes a long-standing—I believe it's about 30 years, approximately—old rule which is vital to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Pre-judgment interest—we were talking about that earlier—on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays

paying those damages. This measure was presented by this government as a money-saving initiative for insurers. Clearly, the change in the interest rate has nothing to do with fighting fraud.

We have a responsibility as legislators to determine the rates for auto insurance in Ontario. When the government of the day voted in this Legislature to make auto insurance mandatory, it became our job to protect the people of this province by ensuring that not only rates but also benefits are appropriate and fair. It also means that we must be knowledgeable about the industry and how it operates. More specifically, we need to understand that the profits they are making are commensurate to the benefits we require they offer.

So far, we have seen much disagreement over what those profits actually are. On one hand, we have the industry telling us that they aren't making the profits that many claim they are, and further asking for a reduction in benefits to offset apparent losses. On the other hand, we have Ontario families paying sky-high rates for benefits that this government has allowed to erode time and time again, and now that same government is asking us to remove their access to the last line of defence: the justice system. This is a measure I am not sure I can support, in good conscience.

Historically, accident victims have had the right to go to court or to arbitration to dispute this wrongful denial of pain-and-suffering damages. However, under the proposed legislation we are here to discuss, the right to sue will be taken away entirely. Again, I ask each member present to think about what recourse they would seek if it was their family member or loved one who was waiting for pain-and-damages settlement but was refused. What options would you have available to you and your loved one?

We are fortunate to live in Ontario, where we have an open court system that is not bogged down with frivolous lawsuits, as we see with our neighbours to the south. We, as citizens, have the right to seek redress in the courts for wrongs committed by others and for the denial of benefits by insurance companies.

How do we go from "fortunate" to "behind closed doors"? I can tell you how. It's with bills like this, that prevent and deny access to open and fair court proceedings in favour of small backroom tribunals that answer to ministries and political masters, not the laws of the land. 1620

I know that my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has referred to Justice Cunningham's report, and I agree with him on this when he stated:

"Justice Cunningham said very clearly that getting rid of the adjudicator and the regulator component of FSCO was important because there is a bit of a conflict there. There's a regulator on one side and an adjudicator on the other side. Justice Cunningham did not say, though, that you should replace experienced, qualified, salaried, independent decision-makers with per diem, inexperienced folks without the expertise."

He went on to say:

"I assure you that Justice Cunningham would have liked to have seen those same arbitrators who are qualified, who are experienced, transition to a separate public tribunal ... but not a tribunal like the Licence Appeal Tribunal, which deals with liquor licence violations, with licence revocations, and has absolutely no experience with insurance law and the claims that people are dealing with. That's not what their expertise is."

I couldn't agree with my colleague more on this. My past experience in the insurance industry has taught me there is a level of expertise that is necessary to adjudicate claims that comes with regulated education, years of experience and a willingness to help understand the complex language and policy details that can have very challenging implications for everyday Ontarians. We have heard one too many times that efficiency, expediency and cost savings are the mantra for this government, but the reality of their actions proves to be different. Was this government concerned with efficiency when they blew \$1 billion on closing gas plants to save Liberal seats in this very Legislature? Or perhaps they were looking for expediency when they simply lost track of millions of public dollars on eHealth. And, of course, we still can't get a straight answer from the health minister on how it was possible that she didn't notice \$1 billion flying out right from under her nose to the CEOs and their girlfriends with the Ornge air ambulance debacle, in the name of cost savings.

Quite frankly, the time for the "just trust us" routine is long over because, at the end of the day, the people we are here to serve are having a heck of a time just trusting anyone at this point, and they have every right to feel that way. When their government continues to claw back public services to offset billions of public dollars in losses they accumulated, it's no wonder why trust isn't very easy to come by. Now we are watching this government, in the name of efficiency, expediency and cost savings to the insurance industry, propose to wipe out access to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens and to replace those courts—those fundamental rights—with a tribunal.

One thing I want to make patently clear is that it is a falsehood to suggest that this bill in its current state will provide cost savings or reform to the insurance industry and reduce insurance premiums. If people generally understood how the dispute resolution system will work under the new legislation, I believe that most Ontarians would take issue with this.

Let's walk through to see where the problem lies. Under this bill, an accident victim will take their case to a new arbitration system. While that new system may be appropriate to handle many of the disputes in the system, it is certainly not appropriate for all of them. One of the significant disadvantages of this new system is that, if the accident victim is successful in proving that the insurance company should have paid the claimed benefit, the insurance company is forced to only pay a tiny fraction of the legal costs, unlike the court system.

In essence, what this means is that even when you have your day in court—or rather, you have your day in tribunal—and you win your case, the insurance company will only have to pay the smallest fraction of the legal costs that they would have been required to if your case had been heard in a court of law. This means that the entities that are at fault for not paying out pain-and-suffering damages which forced the necessity for a trial—or rather, a tribunal—now don't have to pay the costs they will have if you have had access to the court system.

Now, I don't know about anyone else here today, but in my mind, this issue begs the question: In what way does this prevent fraud or reduce the cost in any way to Ontario taxpayers? In fact, it can be easily argued that this bill makes the case for insurance companies to simply refuse payments to all pain-and-suffering claims and take their chances with a tribunal full of inexperienced adjudicators. The purpose of being awarded legal costs by those who have been injured is meant to be a fair compensation for being required to take an insurance company to court. With this vital component gone, I am unsure of who this bill is meant to protect. It seems to me as though an insurance company posting record profits should not be at the top of the list of those seeking protection from injury. It also seems like we are providing them with every opportunity to get off the hook for bad decisions.

I do recognize that not all insurance companies behave in an unethical manner; there are some good insurance companies that do the right thing. I know this from my past experience, and I don't think it's appropriate to paint all carriers with the same brush. But let's be frank about this: An insurance company seeks to improve their profits. They are a business and are in business to make money, and there's nothing wrong with that. We all need to earn a living. The difference is, it is our job to oversee the balance between companies making profits and protecting the health and safety of the public, and we all know that these two goals are not in sync with each other.

Another serious implication of this tribunal route is that if the accident victim was injured and it was someone else's fault, the victim now has to pay a lawyer to bring two entirely different cases into two entirely different systems: one in the court against the person who injured you, and this new arbitration against your insurance company who denied your benefits. The accident victim now has huge extra legal costs and two different legal proceedings, one in the court system and one in the arbitration system. It seems clear to me that this process is attacking the accident victim again. Asking an accident victim who has been denied their pain-and-suffering payout to leverage the cost of two legal cases seems rather ludicrous and wholly unfair. If they were in a position to afford two legal cases, chances are they wouldn't need a pain-and-suffering payout in the first place.

It makes far more sense to allow an accident victim the right, which they currently have, to bring the two claims together in court and to vastly reduce the costs they have to incur. None of these changes has had anything to do with fighting fraud but everything to do with making it easier for insurance companies to wrongly deny benefits, delay settlements and make it harder for you to collect what Ontarians are rightfully owed.

I think it's also important to recognize that our auto insurance system is very complex. The language we use when underwriting policies is not easy to read or understand. I encourage everyone in this room to go home tonight, read through your own policies—whether they be home or auto or health—and ask yourself: Could any person reading this understand it? I think you'll find the answer is, it's very unclear when you read the policy wording. It's not your standard, everyday, plain English.

Yet here we are making it even tougher for people to access the benefits that they are reasonably entitled to. We know how this plays out. This proposed change will make sure that more victims just give up because they can't afford the fight. That is not what I call protecting the public good and certainly not for a law that this Legislature deemed mandatory.

As I have stated, Bill 171 would change the 30-yearold rule that has been so important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain-and-suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. Basically, it is going to ensure timely payment for pain-and-suffering damages by insurance companies to innocent victims.

Speaker, imagine: You're injured in a car accident, you can't work, and you have a settlement that's coming to you. You wait a week, two weeks, a month, two months, a year. The result of waiting for that settlement is devastating to people financially. They can't pay their mortgage if they're not well and they can't continue to work, so they may even lose their home.

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Losing your home and financial issues can cause a lot of stress in the family. You can end up being financially devastated. Perhaps your family unit can be destroyed. It's not a healthy way to promote payment, when people actually win an award, to have that 5% being looked at reduced to 1.3%. Insurance companies will just keep that money longer. If there's no incentive, I think—and again, this would be just a suggestion, perhaps in committee—that the penalty for interest should actually be higher, because that way accident victims are getting their compensation much quicker and they can carry on with their lives.

Delay after delay just makes things more tragic for someone who—an accident means it wasn't intentional. There's always somebody going to be at fault in an accident, regardless, because somebody is going to cause it. But you don't go out that morning and say, "I'm going to have an accident." The accident is not foreseen, but someone is going to be responsible. When there's an injury involved, that's the worst kind of accident.

Changing this, where you have two dispute systems so that accident victims who are injured have to jump through more hoops just to get compensated for their injuries, doesn't seem like the right way to go. Though we do want to make sure that consumers are protected, I think, if we send this bill to committee, there are going to be lots of great discussions around this and how much of a flaw there is in this bill and how it isn't intended to protect consumers the way it has been set up now.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to add a couple of comments to the previous speaker from London-Fanshawe. The government has agreed that auto insurance rates will go down by 15% over the next two years. I think all of us in this chamber know that auto insurance, the way it's administered, is very complex and it's not that simple. This is just one phase of tackling the whole industry problem.

My colleague across the way criticized the bill that is in front of us strictly on one viewpoint. If you listen to her carefully, it's all about benefits to an accident victim, but she never really commented on the bill itself, which actually has many other parts to it. If you're familiar with the auto industry, with the fraud that is going on compared to other provinces, you will realize that there is fraud in the health system providers, there is fraud in the towing industry and there is fraud in the autobody industry. Unless you tackle all these fraud areas of this complex issue—just dealing with the accident victim and their benefits, you're not going to solve the problem. You have to fix the front end of the system before you tackle the back end.

I'm kind of disappointed, because this member criticized what this government is doing, but I would like to remind the member that she said it was 30 years in the making. Her government had a chance to fix this system, and they chose to announce that they would go to public auto insurance and then backed off, because they realized it was very complex. It's not something that you could solve simply by dropping a stick and saying, "Okay, we fixed the problem."

I think the government is doing the right thing: Tackle the issues with all the stakeholders, and, bit by bit, we will solve this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to the member from London–Fanshawe. She admitted that she worked in the industry. I was quite interested too, that she said, which is quite inconsistent with normal remarks by the NDP, "Insurance companies are in the business to make money, and there's nothing wrong with this." That's entitled to your opinion, and I understand that. There's a rate premium built into this for insurance, a guaranteed rate of return. As has been said, the issues in the insurance industry right now—one of the primary—she says, "The premiums themselves, which is their revenue source,

aren't making any return on investment." ROI is down for everyone, basically. They count, on an actuarial basis, of about a 6% return on premium dividends.

The rates going up, as some people have already commented on, was the fraudulence within the system itself. There have been many studies by many groups addressing the fraud thing, and expert panels suggest that it's an inordinate cost.

This bill is not going to solve the issue totally. I think we are supporting—our member from Nipissing spoke earlier, and our expert on this is actually the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. They've come up with a number of suggestions, indeed, in our remarks, but I'm going to conclude by putting on the record one of my constituents' letters; I have a number of letters on auto insurance here:

"I have [an] excellent rating and what has really upset me is that I have a son who now has his G2" and had to stop driving because of the rates. Over the past year, "I have had to change insured vehicle."

In November, he "put on the road a 1997 Ford F-350 crew cab pickup" for \$638 for one year.

"A month later I had to take it off. But I put [it] back on the road with the same insurance." It's now \$657 for the same car.

These are people of modest incomes, who can't afford insurance today.

The Liberals brought this bill forward under an agreement with the NDP. This does not fix the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for London–Fanshawe on her remarks. I think she highlighted some very significant issues that members of this Legislature will have to address when this bill moves to committee—and it sounds like it will because of the support that has been expressed so far, along with the concerns that have been expressed.

Basically, this bill flows from two clear issues that no one has any disagreement with: One, there are problems with the dispute resolution system—we know this from Justice Cunningham's report—and two, there is a need to reduce fraud in the system.

I can say, from my own experience participating as a member of the Standing Committee on General Government, which is engaged in a lengthy and ongoing review of the auto insurance industry, that there is a real difficulty in getting access to the true numbers. What are the actual profits that insurance companies are making and what is the real extent of fraud in the system?

What we see with this bill is an attempt to ensure that the insurance companies' profits remain high. We know that in 2010, the actions that the government took resulted in a windfall for insurance companies, but there was no decrease in premiums for consumers and drivers. We hear from our constituents all the time about the kinds of pressures that people are facing, with high auto insurance premiums, with hydro bills, with costs that just

keep going up and up. Consumers need some relief, and this bill is not going to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm happy to speak to this. We agreed to reduce auto insurance rates by 15% on average within the next two years. Six months after making that commitment, we're on track. We've reduced the auto insurance rates by almost 5% since August.

Now we're moving to the next stage of getting this issue under control, and there are three core elements to the next steps that we're taking.

One is that we want to transform the dispute resolution system so that Ontario drivers can get their claims settled faster. Why is that important? Well, the faster we can settle claims, we're going to cut down on the expenses of maintaining and arguing over these claims and curbing the financial and administrative costs and stress on the system.

Secondly, and this one is really important, is the licensing of health service providers that bill the auto insurers so that only licensed providers can get paid directly by insurers. This fights fraud, because one of the areas where the fraud is—there are people out there, organizations out there, that are providing so-called health services to the victims of accidents. They then bill the health insurance plan and they get paid. But there's no real control over the quality of the service or the necessity of the service or the regulation of the service. By licensing those service providers and saying, "If you haven't got a licence, then you cannot bill the health plan for the services that you provide," that's an enormous step in giving us control over excessive and unnecessary billing.

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Excessive and unnecessary billing is one of the key elements that drives insurance rates up, because the insurance companies are paying those bills. That goes into their overhead; hence, it drives rates up.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to my colleagues in the House who commented on my debate.

I think the point I want to get across is that this bill presumes that people are committing fraud—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: "Presumes"?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, before they actual-y-

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: They are.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Everybody is committing fraud? No. Not everybody is committing fraud.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Absolutely—what the minister mentioned just now about licensing the facilities that deliver the care to victims who have been injured. You can't just, all of a sudden—people aren't guilty of fraud before they actually get to the system to argue their case for the compensation they need because of injuries.

I'll tell you why I'm a little passionate about this issue: because my brother—I have four brothers; I don't remember which in line—he's the second-youngest, and he was a very athletic man. He was training for a triathlon—he was jogging in his neighbourhood—and a vehicle hit my brother head-on, through the driver's side. My brother went up 80 feet in the air and landed on the ground, and the vehicle kept going.

He had four young children at the time. He was so seriously injured. He had to have three operations on his leg; he broke his leg. He has back problems. If people are going to presume that he is committing fraud—he had to stay home for a year. He could barely walk. He couldn't function normally.

If this is the way they're going to treat accident victims, I have a very serious problem with it. You don't presume that the victims are being fraudulent. I agree that maybe the health care providers need to be licensed so that they're not putting in expenses that are fraudulent, but let's treat the victims with some fairness.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is the government putting anybody up? My goodness; if the government is not going to put somebody up, I guess we'll have to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All right. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am a little bit surprised that I was called on to speak to this bill today. My goodness gracious. I thought for certain that the government that brought forth the legislation was going to be putting forth a speaker on this bill.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a very important bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They keep talking about what an important piece of legislation this is. This is the bill that kind of sealed the deal for them in the last budget—the promise.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You know—the coalition?

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, the coalition, the budget promise, where you guys sat down—where Kathleen Wynne sat down with Andrea Horwath? Andrea Horwath was publicly postulating about how she may not support the budget, making some kind of a protest that she didn't believe that the Liberals were going to follow through with their 15% reduction.

Lo and behold, the promise was made. Minister of Finance Charles Sousa says, "We will be reducing premiums 15%." Then we actually get to talk about what they're going to do. You see, the NDP wanted the government to come in and legislate insurance companies: Wham! Bang! A 15% reduction in auto insurance rates.

We all know that that is not possible. You can't walk into Loblaws and say, "Mr. Galen Weston, you'll be reducing your prices by 15% effective Saturday." You can't go into General Motors and say, "You're going to be reducing the price of cars 15% on Thursday." But somehow the NDP thought that you could do that in the insurance business.

Granted, I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker—and you know this maybe better than anybody—

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know about that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, maybe not better that anybody. Okay. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek says that maybe you don't know it better than anybody, and maybe I was putting you on a higher pedestal, but I think you know it certainly as well as I do that the cost of operating a motor vehicle today, much of it-you can't just think of the maintenance and the fuel and all of that, but one of the things that makes people ask themselves whether they can afford to drive a vehicle today, to afford to operate a car, is, "Can I afford the insurance?" I'll tell you, if you're a young person with an unproven record, or worse, a young person with a record, you are going to pay. I know. I have a 24-year-old daughter and a 22-year-old son. The other kids are older, and their rates are lower now. But I'm looking forward to Emily turning 25 this year, because that's kind of the tipping point.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You've got to marry her off.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She did get married. We married her off. My colleague from Dufferin-Caledon says, "You've got to marry her off." Well, we didn't marry her off; we actually thought we made a hell of a good deal by having her marry a fine young man, Tom Colucci—Tommaso Colucci—from the Toronto area here, and they have a beautiful daughter Adelaide as well, Mr. Speaker.

But the cost of insurance is certainly an expensive portion of operating that vehicle, so we were somewhat pleased when finally, after—you know, we have been trying to convince the government for a long time, and if I for a moment might be able to say, I want to tip my hat and do a little shout-out to Jeff Yurek, our critic on this file. He has done yeoman work and a tremendous job.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And I take back what I said about you, because I think that no one in our caucus understands the insurance business today better than Jeff Yurek, and you know why? It's because of the tremendous amount of work that he has done on this file, working with stakeholders of every shape and form, including people with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, including people with the Insurance Bureau of Canada, including the trial lawyers—and I know that the trial lawyers have some trouble with this bill.

Hon. David Zimmer: I was a trial lawyer.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hear from the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. He says, "I was a trial lawyer." I'm not sure if he's trying to heckle me or if he's looking for a new job, because he could be the next cabinet minister resigning over there. You never know, because every time you turn around, they're dropping like flies. If the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs wants to make an announcement today—even during my speaking time—that he is prepared to resign his seat and his cabinet position, you're going to have a two-minute hit when I'm all done—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'm going to ask the member to stick to discussion and debate on the bill. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll endeavour to do my best, Speaker. I didn't even hear a point of order. You're a proactive Speaker. What are we going to have here next?

I will say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, when he made the comment that he was a trial lawyer, I can

only say that I'm glad I was never a client.

Anyway, we're trying to speak to the legislation today, and we're supporting this legislation—I want to say that, and I could have said that at the outset—but we do have some problems with the bill. We don't think it is going to achieve the kinds of savings that the government implies that it will.

If you don't really attack the real problems in the insurance game—and I'm reluctant to put it that way, but the biggest challenge in the insurance business, as it is in so many areas today, is dealing with fraudulent claims. We live in a society where we're almost looking for opportunities to take advantage of situations sometimes. So there are unscrupulous people out there who see these situations and jump on them as an opportunity to profit themselves.

Every time there is a fraudulent claim made, I say to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the new member from Niagara Falls and the recently elected member—in the summer—from London West, you're going to pay for those fraudulent claims. You may not be involved in them—in fact, I'm quite confident you're not, and I want to put that on the record. But if there's somebody out there making a fraudulent claim for insurance, everybody pays.

1650

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Emily pays.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Emily pays. Thank you very much, I say to the member for Scarborough-Rouge River. He practically took the words out of my mouth. I was just going to say that Emily and Lucas—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We all pay. The problem is, I'm paying for that insurance. That's the biggest problem. It's Daddy who is still paying for that insurance. So I want to get Emily's rates down, and I want to get Lucas's rates down, because it's going to be a heck of a lot easier on me.

If that is the case, that every time there's a fraudulent claim made and, more importantly, a fraudulent claim paid—and they know every little angle out there. They're smart and they're devious, and that's a lethal combination. They're very good at what they do. If they're able to get one of these fraudulent claims through, the payouts are massive, and they add up.

I want to thank Ralph Palumbo from the Insurance Bureau of Canada for visiting me.

Hon. David Zimmer: He's a good man.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A good man. He comes from the banking industry. He was not a trial lawyer, I don't think, I say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. **Hon. James J. Bradley:** They used to have a good president.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Well, you know, my brother was the president of that organization at one time.

Ralph comes to see me in the office—well, where else?—and he explains to me about the scope and the width and the breadth of fraud in the insurance industry across this province. Speaker, it is staggering. The number one thing you've got to do, then, is to eliminate the number one problem. Fraud is the number one problem in insurance.

I was pleased to get the statistics for my riding: the county of Renfrew and a portion of the district of Nipissing. The claims relative to other areas—and I will not bring up the other areas. I'm only going to praise the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, those good people who sent me to this chamber in 2003, 2007, 2011 and, the good Lord willing, sometime again in the future, whenever we have that election. We're just wondering when that budget might come. I'm going to talk about that, maybe, if I may, because how can you separate insurance and the budget? Right, Speaker?

One of the lowest incidents of fraudulent claims anywhere—or claims, period—is right in Renfrew county. They're good, honest, hard-working people. They're not looking to take advantage of anybody. They're looking to earn their living. Do you know what they do? When their fellow man is in trouble, they are there to help. They're charitable people, always looking to help. I'm proud to represent them, Speaker, and proud of the statistics that Mr. Palumbo was able to present to me, as the representative from the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

One of the things they're doing in this bill, I was told by Mr. Yurek—and as I say, this guy knows his business—is they're going to move the administrative costs from industry-funded FSCO to the taxpayer-funded Ministry of the Attorney General. Well, it's going to change the administration, and it's going to change how things are done, but how is that going to reduce insurance rates? These are some of the things in the bill that don't really address the challenge. What people are upset about is the cost of living.

While I'm on the subject of the cost of living, Speaker, let's talk about the cost of electricity in the province. Are we now at a stage where you have to decide: "Do I pay my hydro bill or do I pay my auto insurance? Do I pay my grocery bill or my hydro bill or my auto insurance? Do I pay my rent or my hydro bill or my auto insurance?"

Hon. Michael Coteau: What if you have an electric car?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Immigration says, "What if it's an electric car?" What, do you think there's no cost for insurance on an electric car? Then you might be paying more for hydro.

We've got to stick to the subject here. It is about insurance. Just because someone drives an electric car doesn't get them an exemption on their insurance, Mr. Speaker, and the minister, I'm sure, knows that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He's trying to cloud the issue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sometimes they do their best over there to get me talking about something other than the bill. I'm always trying to bring myself back before you do, sir.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm reading about Conrad here. He writes very well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of the Environment—I do appreciate his interjections. I ran into a couple of his constituents this weekend in Golden Lake. They have a cottage out on Tranquility Bay, I think it is, on the south shore of Golden Lake.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Is that near Barry's Bay?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not too far from Barry's Bay—about 25 miles, maybe a little farther, to the south shore of Golden Lake. But two of Minister Bradley's constituents, Bill and Jean Waters—my wife and I were having breakfast with them after church in the Walker's Landing restaurant in Golden Lake. They had some nice things to say about the member for St. Catharines. I'm just looking for the opportunity when he runs into the Waters and has some nice things to say about the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I'm looking forward to that time.

Anyway, they clearly knew the member for some time. We were talking about the length of his career. You know he has been here since 1977? I know the pages' jaws are dropping, because they read about 1977 in school in the ancient history course. I understand that. What I pointed out to the Waters was that he didn't just get elected here in 1977; he actually ran in 1967, and he ran in 1971. He took the 1975 election off and was elected in 1977. So he has been in this game for—like I said, ancient history. And he's still here, doing everything he can to make it easier for me to get through my debate time.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Like a classic car.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He is a bit of a classic car; there's no question about it.

Anyway, one of the concerns, too, that the insurance people have is that when you make some changes and it affects an industry, people make choices. For example, State Farm has pretty well left the country. You know the old saying, "Elvis has left the building"? Elvis died in 1977, by the way; the same year that that guy was elected. Elvis has left the building; State Farm has left the country.

One of the things you have to ask yourself is, if a company like State Farm makes the decision to exit, what is it that is driving them to that decision? What's driving them to that decision is whether or not they can run the business profitably here under the system that is operating in Canada or, more importantly, in Ontario.

We have among the highest rates, but the system is not run efficiently. I go back to the fact that they deal with so much in the line of fraudulent claims that that eats up everything. 1700

Insurance is not complicated. It's like any other business. Your premiums have to reflect the cost of doing business and the profit margin. If you don't have a profit margin, you're not going to be in business. This isn't charity. What happens is, out of those premiums they've got to be able to pay the claims, pay all the administration, pay all of the associated costs and taxes and everything else, and then have something left for their shareholders, for profit. That's how business works.

So what happens is, if fraudulent claims become a greater and greater—bigger, not greater, because "great" implies that it's something positive, but it certainly isn't. If fraudulent claims become a bigger part of that pie, which has happened in Ontario here, then something else

has to shrink.

If you couple that with legislation like the NDP one, which was just to hack those premiums by 15% across the board, it doesn't work. In fact, we have to be careful about how we make premium reductions, because my colleague Mr. Yurek has shown that some of the people that profited the most or had their insurance premiums reduced by the greatest amount were the ones that you and I, as responsible drivers, would question, what gives here? The drivers with the worst records, perhaps drunk driving convictions or something like that, were actually seeing their premiums reduced by a higher percentage than those who would be categorized as good drivers.

Some people may not know this, but over the years, I've had my challenges with demerit points myself.

Interjection: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have, but I have worked diligently on a reform program, and actually, right now, I'm in pretty good shape. So I say to all the folks out there, we're doing the best we can. I can tell you, if you have a couple of high tickets these days, the surcharges that you get are really, really high. It's a 25-and-25 surcharge on your insurance. If you think the rates are high now, just think of what they'll be if you get one of those big tickets. But I've been working hard to get no more of those big tickets. So far, we've been pretty successful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to say, I listened to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he's absolutely right: There is a problem in the industry. I'll give you a personal example: I went to renew my insurance this year for two cars and a house. I thought, "Jeez, this seems awfully high. What's going on here?" So I decided to shop around a bit. I found a very reputable company in Ontario, and they were \$1,100 cheaper in one year than the company I was with, and I had better coverage.

What's wrong with this picture? There is no regulation. There is no regulation here to monitor these companies, what they're charging. If I'm 80 years old, and I don't want the aggravation, and I don't want to change companies, and I've been with this company 30 years, and they send me a bill, I probably would pay the extra

\$1,100 and not know the difference, thinking that was the norm. But it's not.

People are being ripped off all the time. They say, "Well, it's democracy. You have an ability to shop around." Come on, folks. I can see \$100, \$200, \$300 differences from company to company, but a \$1,200 to \$1,500 difference between companies for less coverage than I was getting before—it's absolutely unconscionable, what's going on.

They don't regulate, they don't monitor, they don't enforce in this province, and that's why people are so

shocked when they get their insurance bills.

You know what? If you raise it 30% and drop it 15%, are you ahead? I don't think so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It was really nice listening to my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's colourful presentation. I want to say that I was very pleased to hear him actually state that fraud is one of the biggest problems in the auto insurance industry.

He did make one comment that he had some concerns with the bill. I may be able to help him, because he said he had a problem with the tribunal being moved to the Attorney General and FSCO being the regulator. I think if you look at governments as a whole, a tribunal and a regulator shouldn't be in the same house. I think the bill is doing the right thing—if I could clarify that for you.

But I do agree with you that fraud is the biggest problem, and I just want to share a story with you. I pay for the fraud happening in my own riding, and I pay high insurance. I think this bill is a step in the right direction; it's not perfect. There are many more changes to be made. A couple of years ago, they arrested 23 people in the city of Toronto for committing medical fraud in the auto insurance industry. A lot of them were residents in my area. I hear from friends and constituents that those same folks are back in business. That's not right. So we need legislation like this to continue to plug the loopholes in the system, and make sure that we can monitor what is going on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions? The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Brock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's close enough. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always hard to follow the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and his vivid descriptions and stories that he presents in the Legislature. My mother is a big fan of his, so she misses him when he's not here. She doesn't really notice if I'm not here, but anyway—we try to put the channel on, so she can see it.

We do have sympathy for him paying his children's insurance, because the price of auto insurance, especially for young people, in our ridings in rural Ontario is so exorbitant. They have to have licences and they have to use their parents' cars to get to the summer jobs or to the

4-H clubs or whatever pony clubs they belong to. It is crippling a lot of families because, by the time they earn whatever wages they can from their summer job, it's basically the cost of the insurance for the year. I would like to see that looked at, too.

The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, my seatmate here, has done a comprehensive paper on the PCs' policy on auto insurance reform. There is no question it has to be addressed.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke spoke about the good claims—that drivers in his riding had very low claims. I can say the same, when Ralph Palumbo came to visit me. But we're paying for this huge fraud ring in the GTA, and the recommendations have been out there for several years.

It's a small step, this bill, but we have much bigger steps we need to take, and the PC Party is addressing that

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'd like to start by saying congratulations to my daughter Jacqueline, who yesterday got her driver's licence, at 17, on her first try. Obviously, I'm now going to be very interested in car insurance and the price of car insurance. I want to congratulate Jacqueline for that.

I want to say to my colleague, who did a very entertaining 20-minute presentation on the importance of stopping fraud from getting into the system, I don't have a problem with that. The problem that I'm having is with what I talked about earlier today: the prejudgment interest. When you take a look at it, the amendments were introduced under the disguise of fighting fraud and reducing auto insurance rates. They were presented as a money-saver, which was very interesting. Clearly, the change in the insurance rates has nothing to do with fighting fraud. It's very clear. In reality, this change is nothing more than another gift to Ontario's already very profitable insurance sector, on top of the recent substantial cuts to benefits that have already netted insurance companies billions—that's with a B—billions of dollars in profit, again, with no consultation to victims. Who is talking to the victims? That's who we should be talking to, and seeing how we can help them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Scarborough–Rouge River, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and also Niagara Falls for their comments.

To the comments from my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock: a shout-out to her mother, Betty. I appreciate Betty forming the fan club of one, the Yakabuski fan club, but I also have a shout-out for a fellow in my friend Bob Bailey's riding: Sid McLean, from Petrolia. Get your details off to us, Sid—I know you're watching—because we want to make that a fan club of two.

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Anyway, I appreciate all of their comments. Everybody has something to contribute to this debate. I appreciate the member from Scarborough–Rouge River talking about the importance of trying to combat fraud, and he's right: This bill is a step in the right direction, and there is more to be done.

We think that our recommendations would have been more successful in combatting fraud. There is a ring out there—staged accidents.

Interjection: It is criminal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's criminal. I realize that it is criminal, but we just don't seem to be able to catch them enough. This is the kind of thing that affects us all, where you go out there and you stage an accident so that you can make a fraudulent claim on insurance. Stage an accident, fake an injury—there are some really, really crooked people out there, and we need to see that those people are out of business and behind bars. We have to put a stop to this, so that the honest people can afford to insure their vehicles so that they can get to work, take their children to sporting activities, arts, drama or whatever—shopping, or whatever you need to do.

In rural Ontario, we need to drive everywhere. We need our vehicles. We've got to have them. We've got to have insurance rates that match the incomes that we have. We're not rich people up there in rural Ontario; when insurance rates are high, it really affects us in a negative way. We've got to do what we can to get them down.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Although I'm the NDP critic for sports, culture and tourism and for the Parapan Am Games, I'm here to speak about Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act of 2014. I also would like to acknowledge my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, who has worked very hard on this issue to reduce auto insurance in Ontario.

Unfortunately, I'm very concerned that the insurance companies will raise the insurance rates to compensate for their 15% loss. I'm also concerned that people don't regulate the industry enough. I gave you a perfect example of how my insurance rate, for the exact same coverage—in fact, I got better coverage with the other company—two large companies in Ontario. My rate went up; I saved \$1,100. That's a huge amount of money.

How do you justify one company charging \$1,100 more for the same or less coverage? Something is wrong. Something is seriously wrong. This business has to have more accountability when it comes to serving the consumers in this province, because I do believe that, in a lot of cases, if they're not regulated properly, the consumers are being ripped off.

You're talking about fraud. You're talking about these people who set up these fraudulent situations, but let's talk about the people whom you pay your premiums to, who are charging me 34% more than the company next

door. That's a little questionable at best, too. We might want to take a look at that.

I would also like to add that, despite this being a government bill, it has been the NDP who, for years, have tried to lower the rates on auto insurance. Do you think, Speaker, that this 15% would have even happened if we hadn't pressed, as part of the budget, for them to reduce it? They wouldn't have even dealt with it. They would have gone and helped their friends make more money again. They wouldn't have dealt with it if we hadn't made it an issue.

Last week, I stood before this House to discuss the Fair Minimum Wage Act. Upon the completion of my speech, I think it was clear that that bill delivered anything but a fair minimum wage, and here I am today talking about this bill that will do little or nothing to reduce fraud and automobile insurance in this province.

In typical Liberal fashion, we have a bill which promises lots but, in the end, will deliver little or nothing for middle- and lower-income earners. There are many aspects of this bill which will reduce neither fraud nor automobile insurance rates. Rather, the bill that this government is proposing will simply hand out another gift to the big insurance companies, at the expense of auto insurance policyholders and accident victims in this province. If passed into law with no amendments, Bill 171 will change the Insurance Act, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, and the Repair and Storage Liens Act—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'm having trouble hearing myself speak. The minister's really loud.

Despite the significant changes, there's little to suggest that fraud or insurance rates will be reduced.

We have two major issues with this bill as currently written, which I will expand on as I continue, if I can hear myself think.

First, in the name of the cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, which was established to safeguard the fundamental rights of citizens, and replace recourse to the courts only, and have added another level with a tribunal.

A second issue with Bill 171 is that it would change a 30-year-old rule that has been crucial to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. This rule, a "prejudgment interest," as it's called, Speaker, on pain and suffering damages, is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. Under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing automobile insurance rates, the measure was presented as a cost-saving initiative for insurers. The change in the interest rate that a victim would receive as part of a payout from an insurance company has nothing to do with fighting fraud. In reality, this change is nothing more than another freebie to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector, on top of the recent substan-

tial cuts to statutory benefits that have already netted insurance companies \$2 billion-plus in savings.

Speaker, in order to properly frame the discussion, we must first go back to 2010 and look at the changes made by this Liberal government.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd be happy to train the minister. He seems a little confused and misinformed, but

I'd be happy to help him out.

In 2010, the Liberal government basically put caps on the amount that insurance companies had to pay for damages and personal injury. So when an injured party made a claim, the legislative change made by the Liberals put a significant cap on their compensation. From 2010 to 2011, the Liberal government reduced the amount of statutory benefit payouts that the insurance industry was paying by 50%, so that the victim lost 50%, thanks to them. Now they want to drop it 15%, but the companies will probably raise it 30%. So useless again. It reduced the statutory accident benefit payouts by 70% just in the GTA. For insurance companies their loss ratios went down from 89%—this is the companies, Speaker—to 65.4%. So who's making the money and who's getting the savings? Not the consumer.

The result was billions of dollars in savings for the insurance companies, and what did Ontario drivers and accident victims get as a result of these damages and changes? Did they see reduced rates? Did they see better injury coverage? No. We actually saw a net increase in insurance rates, despite the fact that the coverage was

getting significantly reduced.

Because he spoke so eloquently on the matter, I want to use the same analogy as my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton did. Imagine you paid \$15 for a movie ticket, but when you went to watch the movie, you were told that you would only be able to watch half the movie. You figure that because you're only watching half the movie, you will have to pay less for the ticket. But no, that's not the case; you're paying full price. Instead of reducing the rate of the ticket because you're getting less coverage or less of a movie, you find out now you have to pay \$17 for the same ticket. Wow, this is getting better by the minute. You went from paying \$15 for a full movie to paying \$17 for half a movie.

This is what happened to drivers in Ontario, and it's not fair. It is very clear that the Liberal government has a track record of making promises for Ontario drivers that actually benefit only the insurance companies. It's no wonder Ontarians are sceptical of yet more flawed Liberal promises and why we're sceptical of their recent promise to reduce fraud and lower rates. I don't think so,

Speaker.

So with this bit of background information and a critical eye, we can now more closely examine Bill 171. Stay tuned, folks; it gets better.

As mentioned previously, the first contentious issue raised with this bill is that in the name of cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens and replace the court process with a tribunal process.

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Currently, accident victims have the right to go to court or to arbitration to dispute a wrongful denial. But under the new proposed legislation, the right to sue will be taken away entirely, and claimants will be required to advance claims to the Licence Appeal Tribunal at the Ministry of the Attorney General. Well, good luck, folks, on that one. This is a denial of access to justice for Ontarians when they are most vulnerable due to injury.

We have been fortunate in Ontario with open courts and with the right of citizens to seek redress in the courts for wrongs committed by others and for denial of benefits by insurance companies. In the name of efficiency, expediency and cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards these fundamental rights of citizens and to replace the courts with unelected, unaccountable, government-appointed, quasijudicial government tribunals. I wonder if there will be any Liberals sitting on that. Probably.

I fail to see how forcing victims through a process before politically appointed tribunal members will result in a fair and just process for victims. All it will do is result in cost savings to the insurance industry. I fail to see how it will reduce insurance premiums for drivers or how it will result in the fairness process for victims. It will only result in more cost savings for the industry

again.

The current arbitrators at the Financial Services Commission of Ontario are highly skilled, experienced, full-time, permanent, salaried employees who are hired to be independent—I repeat, independent—decision-makers. The Liberal proposal would see them replaced with per diem arbitrators from the Licence Appeal Tribunal who typically deal with issues such as the Board of Funeral Services Act, the Collection Agencies Act, the Payday Loans Act and liquor licence violations, among other things—not what I would call experts in the field of insurance, but that's the way they want to go.

Workers at the Licence Appeal Tribunal are part-time, appointed for temporary terms, receive per diem rates and are government appointees. Well, I can see that problems will be created there. That's going to be really peachy. They do not have the expertise to deal with the complex issues around liabilities and injured and vulnerable parties who are seeking redress from their insurance

companies.

If they implement this and move it to the Licence Appeal Tribunal, what will happen to the skilled and experienced FSCO employees? Will they be jobless, pensionless and yet another statistic for the government to deal with?

This is completely inadequate, and it fails Ontario's most vulnerable when they need help the most.

Justice Cunningham, who was tasked to investigate and recommend changes to the Ontario insurance industry, did not anticipate, when he issued his report two weeks before this bill was tabled, that the government would take away skilled, experienced arbitrators in favour of government appointees with less experience and knowledge in this special area of law.

Additionally, there has been no evidence presented that shows that moving the dispute resolution system from FSCO to the Licence Appeal Tribunal will actually result in cost savings. Is it going to cost more? Is it going to cost less? We don't know.

There has been no evidence presented to show cost savings for either victims or the insurance industry either. The government has not provided any evidence to show that there is a cost savings, let alone how much more it may end up costing the public.

The second major issue we have with this bill, as currently written, is the change to the prejudgment interest paid to victims. Prejudgment interest, which is actually paid post-judgment, on pain-and-suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. It ensures timely payment for pain-and-suffering damages by insurance companies to innocent victims. For some reason, the Liberal government felt it necessary to change the 30-year-old rule which has been vital to many accident victims.

Currently, insurance companies are required to pay 5% interest on whatever amount you are owed for pain and suffering. So if you have a serious injury, and the court determines you are owed \$50,000, for example, for pain and suffering, and the insurance company delays paying for three years, they have to pay \$7,500 in interest. Speaker, this is not a lot of money for people who are suffering from accident injuries, but at least it's something to compensate for the delay in their payment. And it serves as an important incentive for insurers not to purposely delay settlement of claims. Isn't it sad that we have to have this system because an insurance company might purposely delay settlement to an accident victim? A pretty sorry state of affairs, Speaker.

Insurers invest the money that you pay in premiums. According to the federal regulator, collectively, they made about 4% per year on these investments in 2012. If the provisions are passed and the prejudgment interest rate is reduced to 1.3%, as called for in Bill 171, the insurance companies stand to earn an additional 2.7% profit on your withheld money that you are owed for every year they put off settling with you. How does this reduce fraud, and why are we double-victimizing the victim? We're double-victimizing them.

How does this lower automobile insurance rates? Well, it doesn't; it's got nothing to do with it. Rather, it's just another handout by the Liberal government for the insurance industry at the expense of all of us drivers in Ontario.

But don't just take my word for it. According to FAIR, the Association of Victims for Accident Insurance Reform, "There is no incentive to settle cases when insurers can make a fortune sitting on the dollars that are owed to the injured accident victim. Reducing the rate paid out is

another incentive for some unscrupulous insurers to create more delay," and not a disincentive to fraud.

But wait; it gets even worse. The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, which represents lawyers acting for plaintiffs, also objects to the change. According to the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, "Insurers will be set to profit particularly in serious cases as they can earn greater returns by delaying settlement and investing the funds"—your money. They're investing and making more profits and you are lying there injured and not getting any money, and you're fighting, fighting, fighting for years.

I ask the members from across the way here, how will this bill get the money more quickly to these accident victims? I'd like them to explain that to me. How will it reduce insurance rates? How will it reduce fraud? The answer is that it won't. We in the NDP know that. The Association of Victims for Accident Insurance Reform knows it too. The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association knows it too. And everyday drivers across Ontario really know it. Why can't the Liberals figure this out?

These amendments to the various acts already mentioned were introduced under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing automobile insurance rates, and as a money-saving initiative for those insured. Clearly, the change in the insurance rate has absolutely nothing to do with fighting fraud. This change is nothing more than another sweetheart gift to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector, on top of the recent substantial cuts to benefits that have already netted insurance companies billions of dollars in profits. It is yet another unfortunate legislative initiative of late, introduced without any consultation or any consideration for automobile accident victims and their families.

One has to wonder how closely the Liberals looked at Justice Cunningham's report when only two weeks later they tabled this rather complex bill. It's clear that the Liberals have no thought in this—none whatsoever. Aside from the criticisms which I have previously mentioned, the bill is also notable for what it leaves out. The Association of Victims for Accident Insurance Reform states, "We have watched the stakeholders and the legislators and their foremost experts spend two decades trying to get the Ontario auto insurance system to run right, but they have repeatedly and stubbornly ignored the key problem—the poor quality of the medico-legal assessments that fuel the disputes which backlog the system." Once again, the bill does not adequately address the issue.

Another glaring hole in this legislation is that it does not address the fact that people's insurance rates are based on their postal code. Why should a driver in one part of Toronto pay more than a driver in another part of the city or a driver in Barrie simply because of where they choose to live? A driver's premium should be based on their individual driving record and not on the city they choose to live in.

Bill 171 also eliminates the power of arbitrators to penalize insurance companies who delay payments unreasonably. Under the Insurance Act, they can currently award up to 50% of the amount withheld or delayed, in addition to 2% interest, compounded monthly. Again I ask the government across the floor, how does this reduce fraud or insurance rates? Again, it doesn't. It is just another no-strings-attached handout to the insurance industry from this government. In fact, it actually makes drivers and accident victims far worse off than they are

To summarize, we have a bill before us that will remove the safeguards for the fundamental rights of Ontarians. We have a bill that will actually encourage insurance companies to delay paying payments to victims. What we don't have is a bill that will reduce fraud and insurance costs. What is clear is that this government has placed insurance companies' profits and costs as a priority and has driven drivers in Ontario down to nothing more than a passing thought.

That may be their priority, but it's not ours. My NDP colleagues and I will continue to fight for hard-working Ontarians who are already seeing their budgets stretched by sky-high electricity bills, sky-high fuel bills, reduced health care benefits and exorbitant insurance rates. It is long past due that Ontario drivers see some relief from the insurance companies and their policies.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm proud to rise today to speak to Bill 171. This bill is very important to my community of Scarborough-Guildwood. I know from speaking to residents in my community that they are very concerned about the cost of insurance and, in particular, about the rates specifically in our community.

If passed, Bill 171 would build on the work that we've done to stabilize and bring down auto insurance rates. Ontario drivers, who have been paying some of the highest premiums in the country, will welcome and really receive these measures quite effectively.

Specifically, in terms of the bill itself, I'm very pleased to see that with the proposed transformation, the dispute resolution system is going to also be given a much-needed overhaul in terms of reducing the financial as well as the administrative stresses which, as we know, will also help to reduce the cost to the system, further bringing down prices.

I also particularly appreciate the importance of licensing health service providers who bill auto insurance companies. This will professionalize the services that are provided, add further transparency and also help to fight fraud. Furthermore, a big fraud reducer is limiting the time vehicles are held and stored once they've been moved. This will also help to ensure that costs are not unnecessarily driven up for insurance companies, thus reducing the cost to the system.

The attention that we're paying to strengthen our auto insurance system is very important for this industry and will help to reduce the costs that our residents are paying.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We've had a lot of debate today on Bill 171, and I've heard a lot of good points-some for and some against—but one of the things that I'd like to point out is that the arbitration system, when it comes to settling a lot of these claims, is somewhat broken. For example, if the claimant wishes to dispute a decision by their insurer, they have to go through a mediation session with FSCO, which is a financial services group, which employs a mediator. Of course, once that's complete, the dispute is either settled or the claimant has the option of going to arbitration or even to the courts.

It was pointed out that, in 2011, the Auditor General noted that mediation was at a severe bottleneck at that time. Back then, they had a backlog of over 30,000 cases. Now, that number has come down to around 16,000, but again, backlogs mean delays in settlements, and it obviously adds costs to what I call an uncertainty to the

system—the broken arbitration system.

It's interesting too. I've been fortunate in driving. I've been driving for over 45 years, and I have been very fortunate that I have not been involved in an automobile accident. But you know what? I've worked hard over those 45 years, and I attribute a lot of the safe driving that I've had to the driver training education that I had back when I was 16 years of age, back in high school when they ran the program there. Again, you know, maybe they need to get back to some of the basics.

The fact that the insurance rates are going up is because there are bad drivers out there, and if you're a bad driver, then you deserve to pay more. As far as I'm concerned, that's the bottom line. But if you're a good driver, you should be rewarded for that, but unfortunately, instead of my rates continually going down, they're going up, and not because I'm a bad driver.

Again, as has been pointed out by other members and by the government, fraud is taking place, and it's hurting all good drivers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for pointing out the fundamental contradiction in the title of this bill: Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. The reason that's a contradiction is that it implies that the bill is going to fight fraud and therefore reduce auto insurance rates, but we know that that won't just magically happen. We know from 2010, when the government introduced a cap on statutory accident benefits and the industry saved \$2 billion, that none of those cost savings were passed along to consumers. None of those cost savings resulted in a reduction in auto insurance rates for consumers.

To promote this legislation as somehow, you know, we're going to all of a sudden see this long-promised reduction in auto insurance rates is really questionable, particularly when the legislation includes the difference between the tort and the no-fault cases, which will require some accident victims to appear both in court and in front of a tribunal. One has to wonder if maybe the cost savings are going to be achieved by discouraging people from pursuing claims. It's going to be much more difficult for accident victims to try to get justice for themselves, if they've been victimized in an accident, when they have to go through two separate hearings, they have to hire two separate lawyers and they have to take their cases to two different places. Many accident victims are probably going to think that it's too complicated, it's too much effort, it's too expensive, and they won't be able to get justice.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill 171.

Let me remind the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek that the NDP government, back in the 1990s, had it in their platform in the 1990s election, to talk about auto insurance-

Interjection: 1990.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay, 1990, in the platform—but they did nothing after they took office. So this auto insurance issue before this House has been going on for a long

My colleague from Scarborough-Guildwood just commented, and my colleague from Scarborough-Rouge River also commented, because we in Scarborough have experienced numerous challenges when it comes to the auto insurance issue, one of which is dealing with the fraud issues.

Our government has consistently talked about this issue. Last August, we announced the Auto Insurance Cost and Rate Reduction Strategy. We also talked about the fact that insurance rates are directly linked to the insurance claims costs. We also know that each dollar the claims come out of also affects the policyholders. I heard the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex talk earlier about the concerns about the insurance premiums being too high. One of the issues is related to the fraud issue.

Those of us who sit on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs had gone out to travel across the province. We consistently heard from witnesses, whether they were lawyers or claimants themselves—they told us about fraud, not just in terms of the health insurance providers but also the tow truck industry. We heard it consistently across Ontario.

To say that the government is not sincere in attacking this issue—I challenge that comment.

The other piece is, in this Legislature, we collectively have a responsibility. Yes, I heard some very good comments earlier, and I think we could take this to the committee and enhance the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough-Guildwood, Chatham-Kent-Essex, London West and, one of my favourites, Scarborough-Agincourt, and I'm going to counter what she said. When she wasn't here, a long time ago, in the 1990s, if you'll recall, the NDP brought forward public auto insurance. I'll remind her that public auto insurance has been extremely successful in BC. It has been successful in Manitoba. Mr. Kormos brought that forward.

As far as being collective, yes, we're all collective. We're all supposed to do the right thing. But if they had their way, they would put blinders on us and we would salute and be like robots and follow the orders of the Premier. Well, we don't. We think for ourselves. We have our own research, and you don't agree with our research because it doesn't suit your agenda.

I would be more than happy to supply you with information that may change your mind, may tweak your memory about how insurance is paid for in this province and this country. I don't think you've done your homework.

They've done the 15%. Some of the people that I represent have had 35% to 60% increases in their rates. Well, gee, if you increase it 45% and the government does their 15% over three years, you're still down 30%. They've got to regulate that, they've got to get a handle on that, too, so that the companies can't raise it to compensate for what they're going to be forced to give back to the public.

I don't know about you, Speaker, but I've been around a long time, and I don't ever remember getting a rebate cheque from an insurance company. Tell me about that one, too.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon to discuss Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. What is clear from the outset about this bill, evidenced by the title, is that it of course deals with the auto insurance industry here in Ontario. What is not so clear is how it will reduce auto insurance rates. I think that it's worthwhile to give some context to this bill, take a look at how we got here and analyze the auto insurance industry itself, because in order to properly consider Bill 171, we need to have an understanding of why it was introduced.

As we know, auto insurance can be a heated topic. All of us have received calls from constituents regarding their auto insurance bills for a variety of reasons. The primary one, of course, is typically cost. Auto insurance in Ontario can be expensive, particularly depending on the area of the province you live in. As the only Progressive Conservative member from the Peel region, I can tell you, the cost of auto insurance is a big issue in Peel region. People have every reason to question why their rates are what they are.

The nature of the business, however, is one of complexity. The basis for one's auto insurance rates cannot be simply boiled down to simplistic sources. Likewise, the solution cannot be boiled down to simplistic boilerplate solutions. That's why it is so unfortunate that the NDP embarked on a PR campaign a year ago telling people that it was so easy for the government to make it so, and, poof, everyone's rates would go down. In the real world, Speaker, things are rarely that simple, and the auto insurance industry example surely shows us that.

To make matters worse, however, the Liberal government, desperate to stay in power, bought the NDP's simplistic sales pitch, hook, line and sinker. What we saw was the Liberal-NDP coalition effectively going around telling Ontarians that the rates were headed down. That was a year ago, and—no surprise—they were wrong. People's rates didn't go down like they promised.

Now, the goal of lower auto insurance rates is certainly worthwhile. I doubt there is a single member among us who wouldn't agree that this is a worthy goal. As per usual with this government, however, the problem is not so much the goal, but rather the implementation.

When the Premier bought the support of the NDP by agreeing to their unrealistic auto insurance plan, the PC caucus said at the time that there would be unintended consequences. Our auto insurance critic—who has done a fantastic job, I might add—Jeff Yurek, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, outlined a detailed plan to lower auto insurance rates here in Ontario. Our plan was focused on the realities of the industry and was honest with Ontario families that the government cannot simply decree that everyone receives lower rates. We argued that a healthy insurance market is one that's competitive and has lots of companies competing for our business. That way, the consumer has more choice in whose coverage they purchase, and by extension, companies must offer as low a rate as possible to retain customers' business.

We pointed out last year that the government arbitrarily attempting to force auto insurance companies to cut rates without addressing the inherent costs behind those rates would lead to a hostile business environment. Our fear was that this would result in the exact opposite of a healthy, competitive auto insurance market. Namely, we feared that companies would exit the Ontario market altogether, thereby decreasing competition and leaving the consumer with less choice than they had before. Well, Speaker, we were right. State Farm, a company that held a significant 11% of the auto insurance market in Ontario, has picked up and left Canada, citing the Ontario auto insurance market as their primary reason.

Not only is this bad for the auto insurance industry specifically, but there is a larger effect. You see, State Farm operated on an agent model, where local entrepreneurs in their communities operated State Farm agencies. Speaker, I'm sure you, like all of us, have been at a child's soccer game or hockey game and have seen a team sponsored by the local State Farm agent. Now that State Farm has pulled out of Ontario, it is a valid question whether that agent model can and will persist. I admittedly do not know the answer to that, but I hope it does, because it is a good model that keeps a good connection to our local community.

My reasoning for mentioning this is because it goes back to what I was saying earlier about unintended consequences. Ultimately, any time a company that accounts for 11% of an industry up and leaves a jurisdiction entirely, it is a very bad development. There is a historical precedent for this as well. This too is something the PC caucus pointed out to the Liberal government and their NDP policy developers. However, we were unfortunately ignored. You see, in 1998 the state of New Jersey similarly promised to cut auto insurance rates by 15%. What they saw in response were numerous companies leaving the market. This, in turn, made auto insurance very difficult to obtain. The end result was that, yes, rates did go down by 15% over two years, but that was followed by a 27% spike in premiums after that, due to a lack of insurance availability. I worry that we could see something similar unfold here in Ontario.

Peel region residents, indeed all residents, cannot afford to live through an auto insurance rate roller coaster where prices go down temporarily and then spike by up to 30% shortly thereafter. It's only natural, when there are fewer auto insurance companies operating in Ontario, for the remainder companies to attempt to get rid of even minimal amounts of risk. These are the kinds of unintended consequences that happen as there is a shrinking availability of auto insurance in Ontario.

It's worth noting that the PC caucus was not alone in warning the government of the dangers that came with the NDP's cavalier approach to auto insurance. The CEO of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—FSCO, as we know it—said to the standing committee—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask that if you have conversations in the chambers, you keep them to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Would you take your conversations out of the chamber if they're going to be that loud? They're interfering with the speaker.

Mr. Paul Miller: Certainly, Madam Speaker; no problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thanks so much, Speaker.

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted—not by you, Speaker—the CEO of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—FSCO, as we know it—said to the Standing Committee on General Government, "Any move that required all companies to cut rates I think would be a very dangerous move. As well as that, I think you would find situations where people would just have less access to insurance and perhaps be forced into ... paying much higher rates than they currently are." It's unfortunate that the members of the committee and the members of the government didn't heed that warning. That's the CEO of FSCO, which is the same regulatory body that the NDP was convinced could order the auto insurance rate problems fixed overnight.

As we are discussing Bill 171 and the auto insurance sector, I think it is worthwhile to mention what some of my constituents are telling me about this topic. I'm here representing their interests and so I feel their thoughts should be heard. One Dufferin–Caledon resident called my office to complain about her auto insurance rates going up. When she heard the news that the rates would go up, she protested, remembering the Liberal government's promises that rates would go down. She was told that her first rate would go up and then it would maybe go back down. This is a woman in her mid-40s, never had an accident, can't remember the last time she got a speeding ticket, drives average vehicles and lives in a safe neighbourhood. Yet her rates are going up.

When I heard her story, I thought it articulated quite appropriately what often happens due to this government's mismanagement. The government was warned that their NDP-inspired auto insurance approach wouldn't work, and they chose not to listen. And now we have people like the Dufferin—Caledon constituent I mentioned who, despite the Liberal promise to the contrary, will now see her rates go up. Indeed, it seems as though the people benefiting the most from the Liberal auto insurance plan are the province's worst drivers.

We saw in January's rate filings that the biggest winners were those insured by non-standard insurers. Traditionally, these companies insure the worst drivers, including those with multiple accidents and drinkingand-driving convictions.

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Some examples of non-standard companies and their respective rate reductions are: Perth Insurance, at a 15% reduction; Pafco Insurance, at 14.5%; and Echelon General Insurance, at 8.7%—again, unintended consequences. I certainly hope that the Liberal government didn't intend for good, honest drivers, like the Dufferin—Caledon constituent I mentioned, to see their rates go up while some of the province's worst drivers see savings. As I say, I don't believe that that was their intention, but it is certainly what is happening, as the evidence shows.

So fast-forward to Bill 171. What we see is the Liberals realizing that their plan of stating that auto insurance rates will go down isn't working, and so they have to come out with Bill 171 in an attempt to salvage their promise and hopefully lower their rates.

All in all, Bill 171 is not a terrible piece of legislation. However, it is a relatively small step forward. I have to say, when—in the same term of a government—we pass legislation, and then we have to pass and debate additional legislation to fix the previous legislation that is less than five years old, it begs the question: How much research, how much background, how much information did you actually do before you brought forward your policy idea?

This bill amends a number of different acts, five in total, including the Insurance Act, 1990, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, 1997, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999, and the Repair and Storage Liens Act.

The bill is designed around some primary reforms to the auto insurance industry and how it functions. One such reform deals with the dispute resolution system available to auto insurance claimants. As it stands now, everyone must, by law, purchase what are called Statutory Accident Benefits. Under the current dispute resolution system, if an individual is denied coverage, as prescribed by their Statutory Accident Benefits, they can initiate a dispute. These disputes are resolved through a process administered by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, as I mentioned previously—FSCO.

What Bill 171 proposes to do is to move the entire dispute resolution from FSCO—where it is now—which is industry-funded, to the Ministry of the Attorney General, which is taxpayer-funded. The idea is for these disputes to be handled at the already-established Licence Appeal Tribunal, the argument here being that, if FSCO's administrative costs are reduced by the ministry taking over this responsibility, then insurance company costs may decrease as a result.

While this would seem logical in theory, I do think that the idea warrants a closer look. For one, this will add a cost to the already deficit-ridden provincial budget. Taxpayers may see some relief on their auto insurance bills, but the threat of higher taxes will still be present, because the current government has no plans to balance their budget. Any time we're adding spending to the budget, I naturally have concerns, because this government has shown itself to be totally incapable of adequately managing the public purse.

Just so that people understand: Right now, that Licence Appeal Tribunal sits with FSCO. FSCO is operated and funded 100% by the insurance companies, who are of course ratepayers. This bill is suggesting that we move that administration portion over to the Ministry of the Attorney General. The Ministry of the Attorney General, of course, is funded by all Ontario taxpayers. So what we've done is we're moving something that is right now industry-funded and industry-supported, and we're saying as a government, "We'll take over that responsibility." Do we really need to do that? We have the ability as a government to regulate the minutiae of all business that operates in the province in Ontario, so why do we need to take over the responsibility of the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Attorney General's office, when we can simply regulate it and ensure that FSCO is doing a proper job?

A second issue that I see potentially occurring with this plan is that mediation services will most likely still remain an issue. The bill does not tell us whether mediation in its current form, which requires opposing sides to go through a FSCO-employed mediator—and experience long wait-lists—will remain or whether a mediation process will be reformed. Instead, in this case, we see the classic Liberal tactic of leaving it to be decided by regulation, which essentially means that there's no oversight.

As I've said many times, when things are left to regulation, all it takes is two signatures by cabinet minis-

ters—no discussion, no debate, no public input. So I have grave concerns with how much is left to regulation.

Another reform proposed in Bill 171 is the issuing of licences for health care providers that provide services to auto accident victims. This is the aspect of Bill 171 that is designed to address fraudulent practices of certain health clinics that will overbill insurers or will bill for unperformed services.

I'm pleased that Bill 171 is finally getting to talk about the fraud aspect, because ultimately, fraud is one of

the huge drivers of higher insurance.

The issue of health clinics was addressed in the antifraud task force report that was released in November 2012. So far, the government has addressed just four of its 38 recommendations, but I guess we can give them some credit, because Bill 171 would implement four more, so if this bill is passed, they would in fact be able to implement eight of 38 recommendations. Two years to implement one fifth of the report's recommendations: For this government, I suppose, that's not a bad record.

But back to Bill 171: The licence issued would deal solely with the business practices of the health clinic. The problem with this approach is that it would again require additional bureaucracy as well as inspectors. Because FSCO is industry-funded, any additional costs then are obviously borne by the customers' insurance rates.

The PC caucus has a better approach. Our preferred approach was also contained in the anti-fraud task force report and instead focuses on appointing designated managers at each clinic, who must be—and this is very important—regulated health professionals. We feel this is a better approach, because having a designated manager will be a requirement in order to bill insurers through the Health Claims for Auto Insurance—otherwise known as HCAI—electronic billing system.

The HCAI system is already in place, and health clinics wanting to bill insurers have to register with this system already. HCAI is able to track invoices from health clinics and is therefore able to identify abnormal billing practices. If fraudulent activity appears to be occurring, then FSCO would report the designated manager to their respective health college. Clearly, designated health professionals would not want to lose their accreditation, so that's why we think this is the best approach. Moreover, another advantage of this electronic system is that a clinic's ability to bill insurers can be cut off if fraud appears to be occurring.

Ultimately, Bill 171 is an okay piece of legislation, but I do want to see some key amendments made at the committee level. I would hope that the committee and the government and the NDP—because, let's face it, a lot of this is driven by a philosophy of "Thou shalt bring down insurance rates"—will actually listen to that anti-fraud task force and will actually seriously consider the amendments that our insurance critic, Jeff Yurek, brings for-

ward.

Take a measured approach so that in two or three years, we're not back here debating another amendment, because what we've brought forward—what you're suggesting—didn't work two years ago, it's not working in 2014, and I don't want to keep debating the same stuff. We have to move forward.

I'll leave it at that, Speaker. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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G		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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	•	Opposition House Leader / Leader perferentaire de l'emposition
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	1'Alimentation
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		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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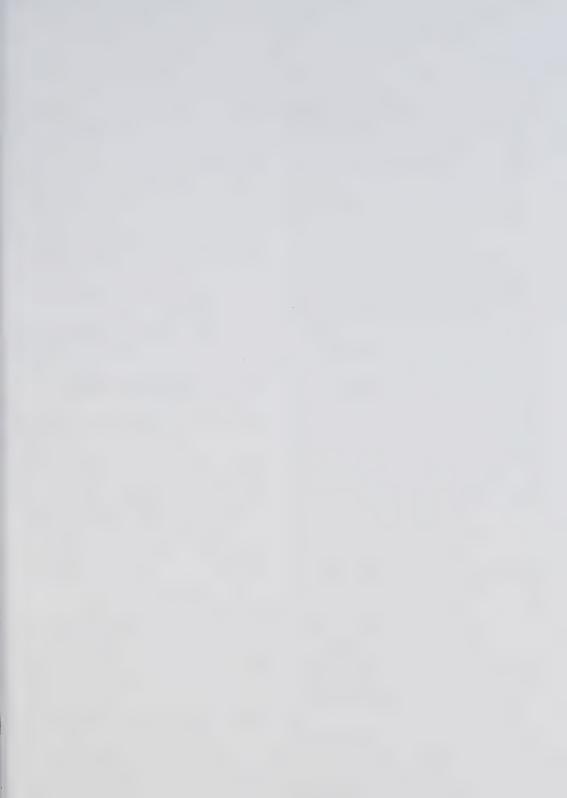
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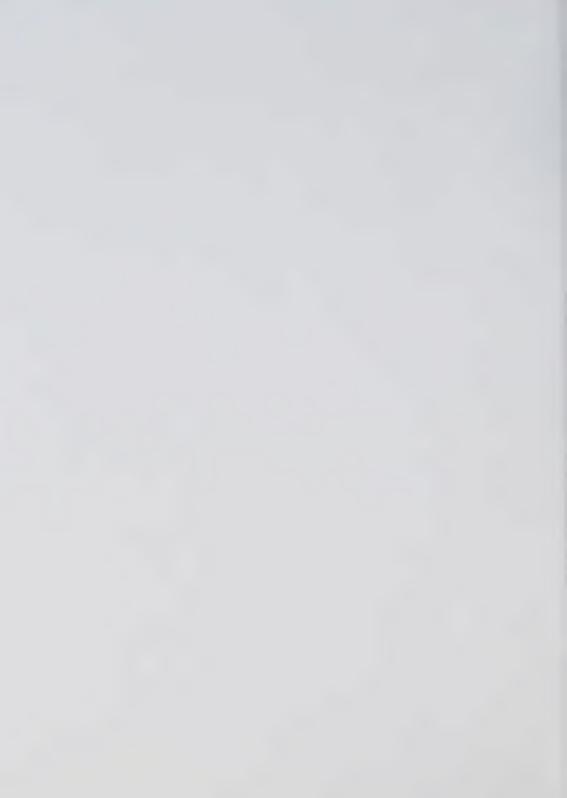
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 40e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 26 March 2014

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 26 mars 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR BRAMPTON–SPRINGDALE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Linda Jeffrey as the member for the electoral district of Brampton–Springdale, effective March 25, 2014.

Accordingly, I have issued a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and debate Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act. Thankfully, there's a short title for this

bill: the Ontario Immigration Act.

In 2015, the federal government will be introducing the expression-of-interest immigration reforms to make the Canadian immigration system more responsive to changing labour market demands. Due to these impending reforms, the federal government has in fact encouraged the provinces to develop systems that will allow them to participate in the EOI system after 2015. The Ontario Immigration Act is this provincial government's attempt to get in line with upcoming changes.

Regardless of whether or not this legislation passes, Ontario must jointly share responsibility with the federal government when it comes to immigration. Bill 161that I will be supporting; I want you to know, Speaker, that I will be supporting Bill 161, in case that hadn't been clear already—we will be supporting at second reading, but not without some reservations. This bill does a number of things well, and I look forward to discussing some of these areas, but at the same time the bill does contain a couple of causes for concern. The bill seeks to create yet another government bureaucracy, and while the Liberal government claims the new layer of bureaucracy will be revenue-neutral, I'm worried that this will not be the case once this bill is introduced.

Perhaps most importantly of all, this bill fails to get to the root of the matter for immigration in Ontario. To actually ensure Ontario continues to attract the best and brightest from around the world, we must address the province's job crisis and balance the books as soon as possible. Anything less, in my opinion, would be a disservice to the countless immigrants who have decided to call Ontario home.

During my time in office, I've had the remarkable opportunity to meet and chat with people throughout the province, and have met many newcomers as well. You really do learn something every day in this job, and learning about the many different cultures that make up Ontario is one of the most rewarding experiences that I really have ever had.

In my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we have people from around the world immigrating here—well, there—people from Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, South America and, of course, other parts of North America, including the USA and Mexico. It all seems that cultures are united by their love of three things: family, friends and food. But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is a province built by immigration.

These newcomers to Ontario are often fiercely proud of the province and country that welcomed them with open arms. Hearing their excitement, their enthusiasm to simply be here should serve as a constant reminder to all of us of just how lucky we are to live in such a great part of the world. Some are born here; others come by choice. But at the end of the day, we're all proud to call Ontario and Canada home

For those who have decided to move to Ontario rather than any other place in the world, we owe it to them to deliver on the promise that their new home is indeed a land of opportunity. There needs to be a real chance to gain meaningful employment for all Ontarians of this province to continue to attract the best and brightest from around the world. To current Ontarians, we have the

responsibility to ensure that our immigration system responds to the needs of the province.

In many areas of the province, including my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, populations are decreasing and there is a demand for skilled jobs and health care professionals. A well-thought-out, responsive immigration system can help address these concerns. Luckily, the federal government is leading the way and taking a responsible approach to immigration policy reform. Ontario must work together with the federal government to ensure that Ontario's economic needs are met by new Canadians. However, we have at times seen a reluctance to work with the federal government by the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals. Lately, Ontarians have seen the Minister of Transportation berating federal ministers on social media, while the finance minister blames Ottawa for the Liberals' own economic mismanagement.

That's not what my constituents want to see and, quite frankly, I don't think anyone in Ontario wants to see that. My constituents want to see a government that's willing to work with others for the betterment of all, not jeopardize our ability to compete on a global market by failing to work in good faith with other governments. Ontarians want and need to see action from their government. By playing political games, the Liberals may have compromised Ontario's ability to attract highly desired skilled immigrants to the province. For the sake of my constituents, I hope that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has been able to take a more diplomatic approach than some of his cabinet colleagues have shown in recent weeks.

One of the key areas that Bill 161 seeks to address is the provincial nominee program. This program is designed to fill labour shortages by allowing employers who can't find qualified Ontarians to sponsor prospective immigrants and allow the province to nominate these individuals on their behalf, tailoring immigration to the province's labour needs. Currently, Ontario has 2,500 provincial nominee spots available, while provinces like Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan have 5,000 spots available. Provinces like Manitoba and Saskatchewan, that have taken full advantage of this program, have seen their immigration rates double and triple respectively. As a result, these provinces enjoy some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

Meanwhile in Ontario, our overall share of immigration continues to fall. It's not hard to understand why. When looking at Ontario, immigrants see a province with high debt, high taxes and an increasing lack of job opportunities. Many immigrants leaving countries with corrupt governments place a high value on accountability and transparency. Prospective Ontarians may think twice to move to a province whose government is under police investigation for the deletion of public documents. Government secrecy and a lack of accountability is what many immigrants have left behind, and they will not tolerate it in their new home.

The Ontario PC Party believes that every single new Canadian should have a chance to work and prosper here in Ontario, and I really hope that that is also shared by the other parties in this hallowed sanctuary, the Ontario Legislature. That is our province's tradition—that's how Ontario was built—a chance for people to prosper and work in a place where they can be free and grow and enjoy the fruits of our country.

0910

On this side of the House, we've been waiting to see a comprehensive jobs plan from the government for months. The opposition cleared the decks at the end of last year to allow the government to bring forward a jobs plan. We're still anxiously awaiting the arrival of this jobs plan.

To truly serve our new citizens, we must ensure that their new home is prosperous. They come to Ontario seeking opportunity and the chance to get a good job, with the hope of future generations to find even more success. We fear that Ontario is losing that prosperity. What was once a shining beacon of opportunity is now a faint glimmer of hope.

Ontario alone received half of Canada's newcomers in 2006. As of 2012, Ontario only received 38% of newcomers to Canada. That's a shocking statistic.

New Canadians do their homework. Picking a new home is one of the most important decisions you could ever make, and it's clear to new Canadians that Ontario is not the engine of Confederation that it once was. Increasingly, new Canadians are deciding to move to other provinces where prospects are in fact better. This trend may have severe consequences for many of our communities.

I might add that we've put together a plan that will once again allow Ontario to be the engine of what I would call prosperity, which will attract more people. The old adage "Build it and they will come"—let's build an economy where energy rates are low, where red tape is cut, and where there's plenty of opportunity. Let's increase manufacturing. We can do this, and we can do it together, but we need to have that opportunity.

Between the 2006 and 2011 censuses, the population in Chatham–Kent, my riding area, dropped by 4.2%. I might add, Speaker, that in our riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we have lost over 11,000 manufacturing jobs since 2003. That is drastic. That's tragic. That is so unfortunate.

I see people, a lot of these people—back in my earlier years, I played sports with them; I taught some of their kids in some of my training programs, and so on. I see these people now hurting and suffering because they have lost their jobs. Companies have actually pulled up, left Chatham, and gone elsewhere—in the world, I might add.

Learnington's overall population remained roughly the same through this period, but there are some troubling realities in the census data. The numbers show that, other than the age groups between 45 and 69, and those 80 and older, Learnington saw a decline through all age groups.

Since then, the news has not been good. Plant closings and downsizings have hit my riding hard over the past few years, while last month—actually, it was several

months ago now, back in November-Heinz announced that they were closing. Last month, there was an indication that they are in fact going to be recouping about 250 of those jobs, but that's still down from 740. It's good news; it's still good news. But, unfortunately, it may not be enough to slow the loss of the population in the area as well.

The initial loss of 740 full-time and 300 seasonal jobs, and the impact on 46 tomato growers, was the darkest day in the history of Leamington. A more positive announcement of a new company creating 250 full-time and additional part-time jobs, as I said before, definitely was welcomed. It's wonderful news. But I still ask the following question to the government: What about the 500-plus people who will still be out of a job? What is being done for them? Therein lies the challenge.

New Canadians come to Canada because they would see Canada as the land of milk and honey. But soon they discover, thanks in large part to what the government has done over the last 11 years, that that milk is sour and the honey has become hard.

While the reform found in this legislation to help Ontario take further advantage of the provincial nominee program is beneficial, it's only one piece of the puzzle. More must be done to attract immigrants beyond the relatively small number of nominees in the program. Solving those issues moves beyond the scope of this particular bill.

The Ontario Immigration Act seeks to allow for the establishment of an employer registry or a recruiter registry. This would mean that there would be a registry for employers to select foreign nationals who provide or offer certain services for a selection program. This section of the bill came about largely to make the province compliant with the expression-of-interest regulations that the federal government will in fact release in 2015. This registry has been called for by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. This will allow employers and immigration consultants to navigate the EOI system. Put simply, it means that we will be better able to address the skills shortages in our labour market more effectively.

The government has in fact suggested that the creation of enforcement and compliance officers will be a revenue-neutral initiative, and therein lies some concern that I have. But without knowing the full scope of what will be needed or how many enforcement officers will be required, the government cannot definitely state that this exercise will in fact be revenue-neutral. We've seen costs quickly get out of hand in this Liberal government, so we'll watch closely to see if these costs grow beyond this initial forecast. Recently, a Toronto Star headline read "Pan Am Games Security Price Tag Jumps to \$239 Million," and further stated that with still more than a year until the 2015 Toronto Pan Am Games, the cost of security is already skyrocketing. On this side of the House, we take all cost estimates with a massive grain of salt.

Bill 161 also includes an amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act that should be highlighted. The amendment would allow for the creation of regulations that speed up the process of registering as a member of a particular college, requiring that the college of a health profession make registration decisions in "a reasonable time." Well, what exactly is a reasonable amount of time? I'm sure that the respective health profession colleges will work with the government to determine what a reasonable amount of time is.

When it comes to addressing our province's doctor shortage, action can't come soon enough. Sadly, many Ontarians do not have a family doctor, and in rural or remote portions of the province, many residents only have access to a registered nurse on a day-to-day basis. Constituents in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex certainly understand this reality. Many are unable to find a primary health care provider.

During my time in office, I've been fortunate enough to shadow at both the Leamington District Memorial Hospital and the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance. They were absolutely wonderful hosts. There I was, in scrubs, shadowing doctors and nurses. It was a lot of fun, and it was an incredibly valuable experience for me to see and witness first-hand. While I was there, I was able to see first-hand the kind of quality care that the doctors, triage nurses, volunteers and gerontology emergency management nurses provide.

I was also able to see them struggle to keep up. In Chatham-Kent, there is a massive doctor shortage that the municipality is working hard to try to overcome. I've been told that Essex county alone is in need of over 100 doctors. It's clear that we cannot fill all of these positions solely with doctors from Ontario. For my constituents, it is unacceptable that qualified doctors are unable to practise due to an inefficient bureaucracy, while they are desperately in need of access to health care professionals.

If this government is truly committed to preventive health care, they must take action on this issue now. The health and well-being of our aging population is at stake, as is the health of future generations. This problem today is obvious. It's a problem that exists now, and it could be a crisis tomorrow if steps are not taken.

0920

My constituents hope that this bill can in fact speed up the process of qualified newcomers registering as members of their health profession college. My riding desperately needs more health care providers. I will gladly support an amendment that will help address this crucial concern. It's vital; it's needed.

It's not just my riding. If I look throughout this—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Northumberland-Quinte West. Mr. Rick Nicholls: Northumberland-Ouinte West. You know, I could start rattling off a number of the other ridings as well. They're desperately in need of health care professionals.

Furthermore, if we don't address these critical issues immediately, we run the risk of Ontario becoming a less attractive option for skilled immigrants and foreign entrepreneurs looking to invest in Canada or start a business. We must act to create an environment that promotes

investment in this province. We can do that by getting our fiscal house in order and stabilizing the province after years of credit downgrades and soaring debt. You simply can't continue to attract the number of skilled immigrants that this province requires if you do not have a thriving job market or enough health care professionals to give them proper care once they arrive.

Unless urgent action is in fact taken, Ontario will continue to receive a diminishing share of skilled immigrants. That's unacceptable. We need to again restore the land of milk and honey, not sour milk and hard honey. I remember a saying I learned in school: "Good, better, best, never let it rest / Until the good is better, and the better best." Bill 161 is a good bill; it's a good bill.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: That's an old saying.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It may be an old saying. I may have read it somewhere.

You know, it is in fact important to Ontario's immigration system, and for that reason I will be supporting it, but we must address the bigger picture if our province is to remain a competitive province in the future. We must reverse the trend that sees Ontario losing more and more of its share of skilled immigrants each passing year. And perhaps most of all, we need a strong economy that can provide opportunity to all Ontarians. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for his comments. It's not often that MPPs on this side of the Legislature agree with some of the comments that have been made by my friends on the right, but there were a couple of things he mentioned that I found particularly insightful. One is about the barriers that face internationally educated professionals in integrating into our labour market.

I was out in my riding of London West on the weekend. I was in a low-income housing area, and I spoke to a family. The mother was an internationally educated veterinarian; the father was an internationally educated orthopaedic surgeon. Both of them were living on Ontario Works in a low-income housing area and just completely unable to get into our labour market. This is a family that brings incredible skills, incredible expertise and would add real value to our community, and were facing barriers in entering and practising their profession.

The other comment that the member made that I found really insightful was around the need to enable internationally educated health professionals to also get into our labour market—not so much because of population aging, but also because of our increasingly diverse population. We need to have culturally competent health care that responds to the different traditions and cultures that diverse people bring to our communities. So enabling internationally educated health professionals is important to grow our health care workforce but also to respond to the health care needs of our many diverse populations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Chan: I appreciate the comment by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings and also from London West. Speaker, our proposed legislation is really the beginning, not an end. It is the necessary first step Ontario must take where we are to chart our own course when it comes to attracting more skilled immigrants to drive our economy and really keep Ontario moving forward.

The proposed immigration legislation will strengthen the province's role in immigrant selection and settlement. If passed, it will put the necessary tools in place to keep Ontario welcome to the skilled immigrants it needs to meet future labour needs, improve compliance and enforcement measures, and increase transparency and information sharing to improve immigration selection.

Everyone—really, everyone—has a different recipe for economic success. In Ontario, immigration is a stable ingredient, along with the great public education, skills training, infrastructure renewal and supporting a dynamic business climate.

The proposed legislation is part of the government's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow. This legislation, in my opinion, will really be able to attract those economic—and also the immigrants coming to Ontario so that our labour force in particular can be supported moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've listened with interest to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex on this important bill. I wonder if the people who are considering coming to Ontario from other countries are warned about the College of Trades and things like that, and if they're told if they have a trade that when they come to this province, it's going to cost them more money than what they thought because they have to join organizations such as this. They may think twice about coming to Ontario.

And we've seen this. We've seen our own children move west because of different apprenticeship ratios, and they don't have to pay extra fees and taxes just to live in Ontario.

I think we should certainly welcome anyone who wants to come to this province. We do have a doctor shortage in this province, especially rural Ontario. It's getting difficult, even though the Minister of Health claims that we've got 5,000 more doctors in this province.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Where?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Where are they? They're certainly not in parts of rural Ontario; they're certainly not in Perth-Wellington.

We would have a more welcoming environment in Ontario, I'm sure, if we didn't have these extra fees and taxes that this government seems to be perpetuating all the time, inventing all the time, and nobody wants them. Certainly people in Ontario don't want them, but this government seems to have an attitude that, "We know best," and we know that that's certainly not true.

Although I'm certain we will be supporting this bill, we need to make some changes to make Ontario more welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I enjoyed the presentation made by the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. I enjoyed the humour, which was good, in a controlled sort of way. I thought that was a very, very useful contribution, and the critique was a good one on the whole. In terms of the economic suggestions, I'm not sure we will agree on that and I'll have an opportunity to speak to our differences on that.

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But the point around the regulated professions, and the medical profession, in particular, is always debatable. Just to be fair to your government, your previous government, you did open up that regulatory body and allow for 50 medical doctors to come on board. It took a while. Your previous Conservative government opened the door a little bit, and that was a good beginning. The regulatory bodies were resisting it, to be fair, and gradually, over the years, we went from 50 to 100 to 150 to 200. You understand the interesting progression that we made, you made, and the Liberals have made, and there's probably still room for more. Whether we could go to 1,000 immediately, I'm not quite sure, but we have opened up the door in a progressive way that has allowed many of the immigrants who have come to this country with qualifications to be able to practise, and that has been a good thing. Could we be doing more? Probably. But we are moving in the right direction.

I want to speak to the economic differences, but we won't have time. I'll do that as soon as I get my 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I didn't realize that I covered so many different ridings when I was being referenced, but just for the record: Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I do want to thank the member from London West; the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport; my colleague and friend from Perth–Wellington; as well as the always-entertaining member from Trinity–Spadina. He is always a joy to listen to and watch; his theatrics are extremely impressive. But he's also a very knowledgeable man too, and I respect him for that; I truly do.

In the area of Chatham–Kent–Essex, I recall that back in my earlier days—and not the "good, better, best" days, but a little bit beyond that, or closer to where I am now—I worked for a major manufacturer. They employed a number of skilled tradespeople who had come over to Ontario from Great Britain—they were skilled tradesmen; they were journeymen—to see how they would work. These people helped to grow the economy; they helped to grow their companies. They worked hard. They made a good living—decent wages and whatnot. Again, as I said before, they worked very, very hard.

We need to continue to provide those employment opportunities to people so that they can in fact come to Ontario. We need to create the right working environment, and to me, that's all about creating a business climate conducive for companies to invest in Ontario, to come with their money to invest, to create jobs, and to help grow the economy.

That is the land of milk and honey that I've talked about in the past, and I know we can restore that in the

future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Durham stood up and spoke all the time while, right beside him, his speaker was speaking. Amazing.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We will be supporting Bill 161, so we want to get that out of the way quickly.

I also want to say that I really congratulate the member from Beaches–East York on his presentation. It was an hour long, God bless, but it was a very informative critique of this government and its policies over the years. Those who did not get the opportunity to listen to him should review the Hansard, because I think they will find it very, very useful and informative.

He does give an historical view of immigration in general and, in particular, of what this government has done and not done. He's absolutely right when he says that the provincial Liberal government has absolutely done little on this file for the past 11 years. So when we have a quote of this sort by a Minister of Immigration that says, "We want a really fair relationship with the federal government to ensure that Ontario can have a little bit more control of its destiny when moving forward with immigration," one has to say, "How long does it take for the government, this provincial government, to establish a fair relationship with the federal government when dealing with immigration issues?" Why does it take 11 years to do something?

It could be that progress with the Liberals is very, very slow, as we've often seen. They tackle problems in a way that is safe, usually not very radical—although every time they bring forth a bill they call it "radical; revolutionary; God, the world is changing," even if it moves at a snail's pace. But that's beside the point. I think part of the problem is that in the last 11 years we've had eight Ministers of Citizenship and Immigration, which could speak to the fact that nothing happens in that ministry when you change them every year. It takes literally a whole year to learn the file, and by the time they learn the file, somebody else is in that portfolio, which could explain, in part, the inaction of the government. I suspect it's not the whole reason, but it could be partly an explanation for why they move ever so slowly on these files.

The province has "long complained it does not get enough say in immigrant selection." I think this comes from the Toronto Star, where they say Liberals have "long complained it does not get enough say in immigration selection." If that is true, it comes to the point I've already made, which is: Why does it take 11 years to actually get to where they want to be?

So we finally have a program that talks about improving the provincial nominee program, where they go from 2,000—I believe the maximum is 2,000—to 5,000. Part of the problem is that they haven't even used up the quota they have. Even though they could bring in 2,000 provincial nominees, they have not for a long time exhausted the entire amount of provincial nominees they could bring into the province.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Minister of the Environment. Good to see you.

So you say to yourself, "Why is the government not using the quota that it has control over and then complaining that they don't get a fair deal from the federal government?" Something is inconsistent and wrong with that kind of policy. The provincial Liberal government does not even use the tools it has to solve many of the immigration problems that it speaks to. And so we have a little problemo when it comes to these kinds of things.

The immigration issues are not strictly reserved to the provincial government—quite correctly, as the member from Beaches–East York. This is a federal matter. I have to tell you that I've been a critic of the federal government—both Conservative and Liberal, to be fair to both political parties—on immigration issues for quite some time, because they bring all these immigrants into the country without ever once saying to these wonderful professionals we bring in, "Oh, by the way, you may not get a job in your profession."

We bring them in and ship them out to whatever province they want to go to, and they struggle to find a job in their field. There's no attempt to tell them, "By the way, if you come with this profession, it might be problematic. Perhaps in this province it could be more problematic than others." But there has been an interest and desire to bring in highly qualified professionals, only to find them working in minimum wage jobs, in part-time jobs.

Interjection: Driving taxis.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Driving taxis is the most typical of all the jobs that are often referred to. It demeans their qualifications. It demeans the qualities they have as human beings—as immigrants. Yet we bring them in, ship them away to whatever province they want to go to and leave them without the resources they desperately need.

As a critique, by the way, of the former provincial government, the one named Mike Harris—

Interiections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just a little mention.

When it comes to immigration settlement services, we used to have what were called Welcome Houses, which the member from East York talked about, in terms of the incredible value they brought to immigrants who came into the country, into our province. We had five Welcome Houses across the province, to be able to bring them in and integrate them and give them the supports they desperately needed to settle. And what did the

previous provincial government do? They eliminated those Welcome Houses.

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On the one hand, the Conservative members talk about how we need to provide more jobs for immigrants who are highly qualified as doctors, to be able to practise, because we desperately need more of them, because we know there are close to one million who don't have a doctor. On the other hand, we've had their government that eliminated the Welcome Houses that provided the support for people to be able to settle in responsible, reasonable, adequate ways—just a little mention.

We have to be consistent with these things, as we speak in support of one thing and, on the other hand, we undermine them by taking away all the supports that they need

The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex asks, "Well, what is the solution?"—because we have become a province that is begging for federal support. The answer from the Conservative member, and the Conservative Party members in general, is that we should simply be cutting red tape. I don't think it has anything to do with the colour of the tape. That's not going to create any jobs whatsoever. The colour of the tape is irrelevant. We already had a previous government that talked about red tape for years and years, and we didn't see the kind of economic benefits that come with the colour of the tape.

I often said that, mercifully, we had some of that red tape in the economic collapse that befell most of the world, in the US in particular, that brought the whole world down, because of a deregulated world where we have conservative politicians all over the world talking about getting rid of red tape. I said that, mercifully, we have a little red tape here in Canada, enough that we were able to diminish the potential collapse of our own Canadian economy. Every now and then, a little of that colour of tape is helpful in economic, deregulated disasters that the Americans give to us.

The other matter that the Conservatives speak about, in terms of how we create a province that will give better job opportunities and make our province a province that immigrants will flock to again, is the idea of cutting corporate taxes. That is one of the primary objectives of the Conservative Party, as a way of bringing jobs back to the province. My view is, that is a failed economic idea. Even the Liberals have finally come to the conclusion that perhaps that is not the way to go. The Conservatives started it, heavily, by cutting corporate taxes, and the Liberals continued.

They not only continued with corporate taxes; they continued with income tax cuts, and they were proud of it. They were proud of cutting income taxes as well. Now they're thinking maybe it's time to raise them again. So while they cut provincial individual taxes—and they did that with glee, with a big smile, saying how happy they were that people got a tax cut—now they're saying, "We might have to increase them again."

They have come to the conclusion that continuing with the corporate tax cuts might not be the way to go. But we're not certain of that, because for the last couple of years—we think there's still a desire to continue to do that, but I think a lot of the Liberals have become nervous, and, hopefully, they will not continue to do that.

The idea of cutting corporate taxes as the magic solution to creating jobs is, in my mind, an error, an egregious error that would take billions and billions of dollars out of provincial coffers, that we desperately need.

We argue that there is absolutely no evidence that cutting corporate taxes is going to create jobs—absolutely no evidence whatsoever. So when you folks talk about that as your magic proposal for creating jobs—I think you've got to modernize your policies a little bit, just a tad.

The whole idea of attacking the College of Trades, and your whole idea of simply reducing ratios as a way of magically creating 230,000—again, it's fanciful and lacking in any evidence whatsoever.

I wanted to repeat that for the record, because it's useful to do.

This bill moves in the right direction. It doesn't solve the settlement issues, as I said. It doesn't deal with that, and it should. It doesn't solve the ongoing problem of bringing immigrants into the province without providing the supports they desperately need so that they can practise with the professions that they brought, that they desperately want to practise in this province. It doesn't solve any of that either, and we should be looking at that.

I think, on the whole, it is something that we—this bill, it is something. This bill moves in the right direction, and I believe that we can make it stronger. Sending it to committee would allow people to come, give their professional opinion and find ways to strengthen some of these measures that are brought forward to the table.

With that, Speaker, I say thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to comment on the honourable member's speech that I think we all listened to with great interest. I want to thank him for some positive comments he made about the bill itself. I certainly agree with him that it would be great if we had a relatively quick debate here at second reading and were able to send this off to committee for further study.

This is really about a start, or another step, if I can put it that way, in terms of the evolving immigration story here in the province of Ontario. As speakers have already noted this morning, we of course are within Canada. Canada is a magnet for newcomers from around the world. Within Canada, Ontario is one of the key players in terms of attracting newcomers.

My own community of Waterloo region—many, when they think of Ontario, think of Toronto as the main magnet, but in fact there are a number of communities such as Waterloo region—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, it's Ottawa.

Hon. John Milloy: —and Ottawa and other areas that can boast a large number of newcomers.

It is crucial that we get this right. It's crucial because, obviously, we want to maintain our history and tradition of being a welcoming society, but it's also the fact that a strong newcomer base adds to the economy, adds to our growth. We are in a situation where so much of our internal growth, which is key to progress on all fronts, is because of newcomers.

I'm very pleased with this piece of legislation. It's another important step in making sure that Ontario has a proper framework to welcome newcomers. I welcome the positive remarks of the members and in my colleague from the New Democrats' speech today, supporting the intent of the legislation. I agree with him 100%: It would be great, after preliminary debate, to get this to committee for some further study.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 161 in a brief period of comments. I want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for raising his comments, and, as well, the government House leader for raising his.

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Obviously, to follow in the same spirit as the government House leader, I say this as somebody who represents a riding within the city of Ottawa—one of the fastest-growing communities in all of Canada, in the nation's capital, where people are coming not only from the rest of the country but from around the world. That is the changing and important face of Ontario.

I, myself, was a newcomer at one time to this province, coming from Nova Scotia. This was a place—and I will say this, Speaker—that people dreamed to come to. They knew that you could get a job, you could raise your family, buy a home, and you could retire securely here. Things have changed within our economy; however, we still boast a wonderful province that is beautiful and ideal for many people to settle in, so I would certainly encourage people from around the world and from the rest of Canada to consider making Ontario their home for the opportunities which we believe, in our party, we can once again restore and bring back.

That said, I think it's important that this assembly does debate a newcomer strategy, particularly for those who come from very far places. I also had the profound opportunity to spend some time travelling and talking with the other member about what it means to be an Ontarian and a Canadian. We sang together and we worked together, and, I must say, he knows what it means to be an Ontarian; he knows what it means to be a Canadian.

I will finish with this, my favourite quote from Sir John A Macdonald: "Let us be English, or let us be French, but ... above all, let us be Canadians."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure to hear my benchmate, the member from Trinity-Spadina, speak about anything, quite frankly. He's one of, I think, admittedly, the most eloquent members of this House.

Of course we're supporting this bill, and we've said so. I think real work needs to be done on actually using and utilizing the skills that our immigrants bring, because that's not happening. Just very quickly, I'll tell you the story of someone who moved to my riding, a surgeon from another country—totally trained in his own country—and, after all, the human body is not that different. He came over here and he was told by the professional association here that it would take him 10 years to qualify. This gentleman was already in his early 40s; he didn't have 10 years to requalify. So what does he do now? He goes back to his home country and works for six months, his family stays here, and he comes over here for six months.

Meanwhile, half of my riding is looking for a general practitioner, a family doctor. It's very, very difficult in this province to find a family doctor. We don't have enough doctors. Here is somebody trained and yet cannot work in his profession and would have to spend 10 years. That's not an uncommon story. We have, of course, many immigrants who are trained that are driving taxis and working for minimum wage. Again, that's a complete waste of human talent; a complete waste of resources.

I had another resident complain to me that he couldn't find people with the necessary skills. There's a real gap between the necessary skills and what we're training our students to do, and there's a real gap between the skills we have that we're not utilizing in our immigrants. There's a problem—a big one—and I think the member alluded to that.

Yes, this bill is a first step—finally, after 11 years in office, the first bill on immigration. That's kind of sad, I think, but here we have it. Let's go with it and let's make it even stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this act. I'm glad to hear that we have support in terms of moving forward with this. I speak on behalf of this not only as the former parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration but also as someone whose parents did come to this country, to this province, for a better life for their children and their families—a fact, I may add, that continues to this day.

When I was parliamentary assistant, I did the round tables, much of which information is reflected in this immigration act, in this act that we're bringing forward. Much of the discussion that we had with the individuals that we met with—these were people that had come here from other countries with various agencies—was about the challenge that we were having here in Ontario with respect to our economic immigrants. Part of that isn't that people don't want to come to Ontario; it's not that, as the party opposite would say, they're coming here and then leaving. In fact, Ontario has a retention rate of 93% of individuals that come to Ontario: the highest across the country. Some 93% of people that come to this province

stay in this province. They stay here and they want to succeed and they do succeed.

What we should talk about are some of the changes that have occurred over the last number of years in terms of the federal programs and the impact that it had in Ontario. One of the things that we spoke about when I was doing the round table was the elimination of the backlog that the federal government went through of 200,000 skilled immigrants who had been waiting to come to Ontario. With the flick of a pen, the federal government stated, "No, we're not even going to process those 200,000 applicants. We're not going to look at them"—and are spending more time ensuring that the provincial nominee programs are increased for other provinces. We need to work with our federal government. They establish the numbers; they establish the targets for the different provinces. Over the last 10 years, the proportion of economic immigrants to Ontario has gone from 64% down to 50%. So again, I rise and speak to the importance of our newcomers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity-Spadina has two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do understand the points raised by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I think that we will be able to—we will, we can, we should—lobby hard. Other provinces have gotten better deals over the years. Even though they control this, we need to fight for the same kind of privileges that not only Quebec has fought for since 1978, but the same privileges the other provinces did. So even though they have primacy over this affair, we can and should fight for the same kind of deals everybody else did, and I'm sure we're going to get it.

I agree with the comments made by the member from Nepean-Carleton when she talks about the fact that we're all Canadians. She's absolutely right. This is the best country in the world, where immigrants can feel so much at home—which doesn't happen in many parts of Europe, but it happens here. But there are incredible challenges for the immigrants today that we didn't face in the 1950s and 1960s in the same way. In the 1960s, my father could buy a house for \$14,000. Today, an immigrant won't be able to afford to buy a home in Toronto for less than \$800,000. It's just not possible. The challenges are immense. So if they can't find work in their professions, they are in trouble. To the extent that we can bring them here, it is good, but to the extent that we can make sure that they get better-paying jobs, that is the answer to the problem of immigration. That is something we desperately have to work on, but maximizing the potential of use of temporary foreign workers is not the answer for me. We bring in close to 500,000 of them. We exploit them. Let's bring them in as immigrants who will become Canadians. That's the answer; not temporary foreign workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Much to the chagrin of the government, it seems that I'm standing to speak today,

because I was certainly expecting that in the normal rotation here, the government would have appointed a member of the caucus to speak to the bill. Speaking of which, maybe there just aren't enough members of the government here today for one of them to have actually to paid attention to what's going on here today. Probably a lot of them are suffering from "I'm not in the cabinet" syndrome this morning and have decided to either come late or not show up at all.

At the outset, I think our critic, Todd Smith, who has done a tremendous job on this file, has indicated that we will be supporting this piece of legislation. In fact, there are many good things—we may not support everything in it, and we'll be looking to get this bill into committee so that we can hear some of the comments from other people who do not occupy this chamber but do occupy the real world and may want to make their submissions to the committee and thereby the Legislature as a whole with how this bill might be improved. That is part of the process that we go through here with this and every other piece of legislation.

As I said, this is something that, in fact, we've talked about for years: that as Ontario changes, as in fact Canada changes, we need to have an immigration bill that addresses our needs in Ontario and matches the skills that are needed with the skills that are being brought from immigrants from around the world.

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My colleague from Trinity-Spadina so aptly pointed out, as he usually does—when he's not lambasting Tories, he actually says some things that make a lot of sense sometimes, and one of the things that he talked about is that you really have to have your act together. If you're going to be offering placements for immigrants, you have to be able to answer the question, "What is there for me when I get there?" If your economy is one that—you know what the Liberals have done to this economy.

The way the previous government left the economy might have been an ideal time to have this kind of law in place, because we were creating jobs; in fact, in an eight-year period, the previous government created 1,088,000 new jobs in the province of Ontario, and that was a tremendous benefit not only to the people who are permanent residents of Canada and who were born here but to those immigrants from around the world that saw Ontario and Canada as indeed a place of opportunity.

Hon. David Zimmer: What?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs—he has joined the debate here, or at least he's showing up for work; he doesn't want to get docked in pay, I guess. Maybe they do what we were going to do, and that's if cabinet ministers don't show up for work, they're going to get their pay docked. So, good to see you here this morning. We don't want to hear a lot from you; we just want to see you.

If the minister would recall—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Mississauga-Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mr. Speaker, we have heard repeated references to the presence or absence of members, and that is not in keeping with the standards of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I hear your point. He didn't point out anyone in particular, but he did welcome the minister this morning. I don't really think that's a reference of him not being here.

But I do know the minister didn't acknowledge the

Chair when he came in.

Hon. David Zimmer: My apologies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. So continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm glad that the new official whip of the government is on his toes this morning and in attendance as well, and that he pointed that out to you, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the member for Mississauga—Streetsville on being appointed whip for the government caucus today. We'll probably be spending more time together now. In my job as the chief whip of the official opposition, Mr. Delaney and I will have more dialogue than we've ever had. I am so much looking forward to it.

Speaker, what I was saying to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs before he interrupted me and we got off on this discourse, you and I—and I'm glad that he finally did recognize the Chair—Ontario was actually once called "the province of opportunity." For those of us who are old enough to have been around before the 1973 licence plates came out—that used to be on the licence plate in Ontario: "Province of opportunity."

Those skilled workers that come from other nations today have to ask themselves, "Is this still the province of opportunity, or should this be called now the province where I must languish while I wait and hope and pray that somehow there will be a job here that matches the skills that I have brought with me?" I would say that that's a bit discouraging for immigrants today.

Immigration has changed too. At one time, almost all the immigrants that came to Canada would have come to cities like Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, our three major cities. I think it's reflected in the communities within those communities that are culturally similar. In all of our large cities, there will be enclaves of people who shared a particular culture and felt very comfortable in settling in a particular area in that community because, while they wanted to be here in Canada and be Canadians, they also felt extremely comfortable being around people who came from a similar cultural background. Hence all the colloquialisms like Chinatown, Greektown on the Danforth, and different parts of Toronto—that kind of thing. People felt very comfortable in those respects.

But it has changed. And you have to ask yourself, is it the immigrants who are changing it, or is it the lack of opportunities? If you look at immigration today, on a percentage basis, the number of immigrants coming to Ontario is actually dropping. They're going to other medium-sized, smaller cities and stuff like that across Canada because they are going where the work is. And

that's not just immigrants. How many people have sons or daughters or nephews or nieces or cousins—and I'm talking about people who sit in this Legislature, who now know that their son or their daughter or granddaughter or grandson, a relation of some kind, has gone to Alberta or Saskatchewan to find work.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My cousin is in Calgary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Northumberland-Quinte West says his cousin is in Calgary.

As families, we want our children to have work, but do we want them to be farther and farther away from us to find that work?

So the question remains: What are we doing to create those opportunities here in the province of Ontario?

Under this government, if you're not getting a job with the government, you're probably not getting a job, because the only jobs they seem to be creating in this province are ones that are on the public service payroll.

Manufacturing jobs have left the province in droves. I met with some folks last night, and they're looking at the cost of doing business in Ontario. They're looking at the cost of hydro. They're looking at the taxation. They're looking at all of the things that incrementally add up to the sum of the cost of doing business across Ontario. They're saying, "Wow," but this is getting scary and there seems to be no willingness on the part of the government to change direction.

We hear from Premier Wynne that she's going to continue going down this road, which, from a fiscal point of view, gets us into more dangerous territory every day, in terms of our ability to recover. It only stands to reason: The deeper you're in a hole, the farther you have to climb out. That's what she is doing to Ontario today.

If we're going to offer opportunities to our immigrants, we have to get our house in order, right here. When those people come here, we want them to be able to find work in the field that they were trained in, within a reasonable length of time. We don't want doctors driving taxicabs. Some of them might be real good drivers, and they might get to know the city real well, and they certainly are good conversationalists, and they might even be able to help me with something if I'm in the back seat of that cab, with respect to asking a medical question. But they shouldn't be practising medicine while behind the wheel of a Toyota Camry or a Ford Taurus. They should be doing that in a hospital or in a doctor's office. We have to ask ourselves why.

I believe that part of the problem is that some of these people are misled when they're being helped to get over here. There are unscrupulous people in other countries, too, who sell people a bill of goods and say, "When you get to Canada, they're going to have some work for you. They've got work for everybody'—da, da, da. So they spend a lot of their money in order to get here, maybe all of their money, and when they get here, it doesn't pan out. That was a common practice in the past, and to some degree it still exists, and that is regrettable.

I want to comment again on what a great job my colleague Todd Smith did. He has been our point man on immigration and culture.

Just a couple of points that Todd made when he was speaking earlier: Approximately 51% of immigration to Ontario falls into the economic immigration category, and that is the lowest of any Canadian province. The national average for economic immigration across Canada is approximately 70%. So if it's 51% who are coming for economic reasons, what is the other 48% or 49%—not even 48%; it was 51%. So where is the other 49% going? A good question, isn't it, Speaker? Our numbers should be at least as high as any other province.

If this is in fact the province of opportunity, where people used to come because this was where they were going to build a new life, a successful life, a life that they could support their family on, well, most people expect that to be a job—a steady, good-paying job that pays the bills. If we're down to 51%, we're not offering a whole lot of hope to 49% of the immigrants who come to Ontario. We have to do a better job of that.

I commend the minister, Mr. Coteau, for bringing forth this legislation. Having more control over immigration is something that we have spoken about in the past. It is something that Quebec has enjoyed for some time, but Quebec seems to have always been able to extract a better deal out of the federal government than any other province, and will probably continue to do so because they play the separation card and play it extremely well.

Having said that, we're not interested in separation in Ontario. We're interested in integration. We're interested in leadership. We're interested in making Canada the strongest federation that it can possibly be, and one of the things that makes your federation stronger is strong immigration policy—good, sound, workable immigration policy. That's what we want to have here in the province of Ontario.

This is something that we did in fact promote in the past. That was an immigration policy for the province of Ontario that gave us more input. We had more input. We had more autonomy in what we would use to attract immigrants and how we would match the immigrants with the needs of the province, so that, when they did come here, the odds of being able to find a good-paying job went up considerably. If you're not matching the immigrants, you're just throwing a pile of stuff at the problem and hoping that somehow, within that group of people—that cadre of folks who come over—you'll find the ones to fill the holes and gaps that you have here in the province of Ontario.

But that's kind of a hit-and-miss proposition. Being able to say, "We need to be able to target the needs with the available roster of immigrants to fill those needs"—if we can match that up in a better way, obviously we can probably improve those kinds of numbers. We can maybe go from 51% and start to climb.

That'd be a great start, but we still have to fix the fundamental problem. We still have to fix the funda-

mental problem that sees our economy shrinking from the point of view of the percentage of the Canadian economy. The percentage of the Canadian economy in Ontario is dropping. It's shrinking. We were the economic engine. We led the country. We always led the country.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Quote your sources.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The new whip says, "Quote your sources." I'll let him do the research. He loves to research. It doesn't matter if it's about Ontario, Canada, the earth, or even some other planet; he loves to do research, and maybe he can find some sources on that one there.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Interplanetary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, if the minister wants to, in a two-minute hit—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, the Speaker would like the conversation to go through him, not through each other. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker.

If the member wants to challenge anything I've said, he is welcome to do that in his two-minute hit. If he's got some numbers that he believes can challenge mine, have at it, but everyone understands and knows that Ontario's economy as a percentage of Canada's was higher in the past than it is today.

We've seen growth in other provinces: the economies of the west, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The economy of Newfoundland has grown. On a per-capita percentage basis, ours has not.

Interjection: We're a have-not province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're now a have-not province. If what I'm saying was not true, I say to Mr. Delaney, we wouldn't be a have-not province. Under your leadership and your party's leadership, for the first time since Confederation and for the first time since equalization payments have been brought in in this country, Ontario is a recipient of those payments—under your leadership.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll end it on that lovely note, since it's 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oak Ridges-Markham on a point of order.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a point of order. I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear purple ribbons in recognition of Epilepsy Ontario Purple Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oak Ridges—Markham is seeking unanimous consent to wear the purple ribbon. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome two guests from Epilepsy Ontario who are here for Purple Day: Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, the executive director, and Suzanne Nurse, the epilepsy information specialist. Welcome to Oueen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, of course, the Ontario Waterpower Association is headquartered in the great community of Peterborough. I want to introduce some members in the east gallery today: Paul Norris, who is the president of the Ontario Waterpower Association, and Valerie Helbronner, who is the chair of the Ontario Waterpower Association.

In the public gallery, associated with the Ontario Waterpower Association and their advisers, are Stephanie Landers, Paul Young, Zachary Vorvis, Marc Mantha, Bob Allen, John Wynsma, Adam Chamberlain, Frank Perri, Karen McGhee and Bill Touzel.

I also have the honour of introducing some people in the members' east gallery today from Hill and Knowlton, one of the great GR firms in Ontario and Canada today. They are two people who monitor question period. I'd like to welcome Genna Schnurbach and Miriam Sherkey, who are with us today in the members' east gallery from Hill and Knowlton.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Sarah Devries in the gallery today. She's the proud mom of page captain Calvin Devries, from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome the returning Olympians and Paralympians from the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. They will be attending the Lieutenant Governor's reception in their honour this evening. I would like to invite all MPPs in the House to join us at the reception tonight.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I feel special, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me.

It is my pleasure to introduce, from Epilepsy Ontario, Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, who is their executive director, as well as Suzanne Nurse, who is the epilepsy information specialist.

We also have in the west gallery residents of York region's Alternative Community Living Program. They include Heather Osborne, Helen Fostaty, Evelyn Tilley, Norma Thornton, Doris Carmichael, Carol Langdon and Henri Latrielle. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have the greatest pleasure of introducing my new seatmate: the newly minted Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to introduce the family of page Eli Park, from Parkdale–High Park: his mother, Joanne Oxley; his father, John Park; his cousin Winnie Beven, his cousin Brian Beven, his cousin Marisa d'Ambrosio and his cousin Luigi d'Ambrosio. They will be making their way shortly.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce the following executives from the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association: Dong Hun Lee, the chair of the board of directors; Don Cha, the general manager; and Ted Kim, who is also with the association. Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome a group of injured workers from the Niagara region today: Richard Prudhomme, Willy Noiles, Randy Bezo, Bob Niven, Chester Marczewski, and Pat Rosano. They're here today to speak to me about proposed changes to the WSIB and the current failures in the system to protect and support injured workers. I want to thank them for being here today to speak with me.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to seniors and people with disabilities who have made their way to Queen's Park today. There will be more than 100. They're trying to get into the galleries. They've come down on three buses, and they're here to hear the Premier's responses to some questions that will be placed

today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will remind all members that my request has been that you introduce your guests, and you may give a title or who they are, and that's it.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I want to welcome the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Bill Mauro, and say how proud all northerners are.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to introduce Brooks Harvey to the Legislature today. Brooks will be spending the day with me here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further intro-

ductions? Last call for introductions.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think it's more of a point of order. I just wanted to thank everybody who took the time to wear purple today in honour of Epilepsy Ontario Purple Day at Queen's Park. It's very much appreciated. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It wasn't an introduction. It would have been classified as a point of order, and then I would have ruled it wasn't a point of order.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Parliament of Finland. They are members of Parliament who sit on the subcommittee for municipal and health affairs. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests from Finland.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka: a point of order or an introduction?

Mr. Norm Miller: An introduction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): An introduction from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to introduce Jane Twinney, who is a candidate for the riding of Newmarket–Aurora. She is a former councillor for the Newmarket area. She's here in the west members' gallery to watch the proceedings this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The Premier will note that the galleries are filling with people from York region. They are seniors; they are people with disabilities. They're on their way in, and they're being joined by a number of personal support workers. These are seniors who are receiving on-site, 24/7 personal care through York region's Alternative Community Living Program.

My question to the Premier is this. Folks are listening. They would like to know from the Premier herself: Why has the Ministry of Health disqualified the region of York from continuing to provide the essential alternative community living services on which they depend?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I welcome everyone to Queen's Park who is concerned about this issue, because we have made a commitment, as government, to ensuring that our seniors are getting the right care at the right place in the right time period. That includes homemaking, security checks and care coordination.

Here's my understanding of what has happened. I'm happy to have this discussion with the member opposite. I understand that the region of York recently made a business decision not to provide assisted living services to both high-risk and low-risk seniors. However, the Central Local Health Integration Network is ensuring that every patient currently receiving assisted living services will continue to do so. In fact, that care will be continuous, although it's being delivered through the local health integration network. That's my understanding of what's happening.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier does not have a good understanding of what happened. These people did not make their way here today to hear the Premier tell them half-truths. It is disrespectful of the Premier to even—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: Withdraw.

It is disrespectful of the Premier to even attempt to represent that what is a cut in service to seniors and people with disabilities is somehow the fault of York region. Here is the truth: The truth is that Ministry of Health policy disqualified York region from continuing to provide that service. And here is the result: Mohammad Asifuddin is 70 years old. He's blind, he is a double leg amputee, he's a diabetic and he has recently undergone cancer treatment. His services are being cancelled. He is being asked to actually pay for additional services. I want to ask the Premier: What's her response to that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, you know, I think what is responsible is that people have all the information, and so to scaremonger and to suggest that somehow service is not going to be provided is not appropriate. Currently, the patients of the region of York's assisted community living program are being transferred to experienced providers who will be able to provide the enhanced care offered through the new policy. As of April 1, the new providers will be offering 24-hour, 7-day a week on-site care at all the region of York buildings where this service was previously provided. There is a change in the delivery. But to suggest that the care is not going to be provided is absolutely not accurate and, in fact, what is happening is that the care will be continued and will be enhanced.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Here is the accurate representation—and I'm sorry that the Premier has to read from her speaking notes that someone wrote for her that are inaccurate. Here are the facts: Last week, CHATS told Mr. Asifuddin that because he needs two people to help him with his lift and sling, he will have to pay for the extra person at the rate of \$20 an hour. At the end of the day, it will cost this man \$3,000 a month to have the same service he had before. And the lift that was provided under the previous service is being dismantled and he will have to pay to have it reinstalled, at a cost of more than \$3,000.

I'm going to ask the Premier this: Is that what she considers a continuation of service? That is a disgrace. It is immoral. I will ask you now to stop it and to restore—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Indeed I was reading from notes, because I wanted to make sure I was giving accurate information. We are ensuring that people who are receiving assisted living support will have that support continued. I will absolutely have a conversation with the Minister of Health. I will talk to her about this issue to make sure that we have absolutely all the information.

But we are in the business of increasing care to seniors. We are in the business of increasing care in the community, making sure that people get the supports that they need where they are living and in a timely way. That is the work that we are doing. Those are the investments that we have been making. If there are specific issues and specific cases that the member opposite would like to bring us information on, we're happy to look into those. But we are providing that continuum of care. The region of York made a business decision. The local health integration network is continuing that service.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to follow through on this same question. The reason is—to the Premier—that the facts that she has—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Don't be telling me the facts are wrong. Enough carping from you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Frank Klees: I know exactly what the facts are. *Interjection*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

First, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, come to order.

Second, direct your comments to me.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm happy to direct the comments to you, and I'm hoping the Premier is listening, as well as her colleagues.

The fact of the matter is, we are speaking here about people's lives. We're talking about the most vulnerable in our communities. We're talking about seniors and people with disabilities who depend on these services to live a relatively independent life. This government is taking that away from them.

I want the Premier to stand up and stop reading from her speaking notes and speak from the heart and tell us that she will do what needs to be done to restore the ACL on-site independent service.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: There are 1.2 billion ways.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order—second time. Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say to the member opposite that we are absolutely and fundamentally committed to providing the services that seniors and people with disabilities need, in a timely way and in their homes. That means that there will be changes in the way services are delivered, Mr. Speaker. But I don't think it's responsible to undermine decisions made by the region of York, to undermine decisions made by the local health integration network, to undermine decisions made by the health providers in York region.

We are working with communities. We are funding increased care to make sure that seniors living in York region and across the province get the care they need in their homes, in the community, when they need it. That's what our investments are about. Quite contrary to the party opposite, we are not going to slash those services. That's the policy of the party opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, Speaker, I believe the Premier should undermine those decisions made by the region of York, should undermine the decisions made by the LHIN, because those decisions are wrong. Those decisions undermine the quality of life of the seniors and people with disabilities in our province.

It is the Premier's responsibility to show some leadership. Just because some other organization makes the wrong decisions doesn't mean that she should support them. In doing so, what this Premier is saying to people in our province, to seniors, to people with disabilities is, "We don't respect what you've done for our province."

What the Premier should be doing is standing up and saying, "We will cancel whatever wrong decisions have been made. We'll make it right. We'll restore those services." She should stand up and say that today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, it may be in the best interests of the member opposite to undermine decisions made by local bodies like the region, like the local health integration network. He may have his own political reasons for wanting to do that, but that's not how we function.

We want to work with local authorities, we want to work with municipal government, we want to work with the local health integration networks, because those are the people on the ground who know the services that are needed in their communities, Mr. Speaker.

I care deeply about providing services to people in this province. I care deeply about making sure that seniors have the supports they need. They have earned them. They have made this province strong throughout their lives, and we have an obligation to make sure that they get the supports they need. That is why we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into their care and working with the local authorities to make sure they get the care that they need, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The people in the galleries who are being affected by this wrong-headed decision are not giving an ovation to the Premier. The only people who are are the people who are trying to defend the indefensible.

The fact of the matter is that wrong decisions have been made. There is time to fix it. We're appealing to the Premier to do exactly that.

It is the ministry's policy that has directed the region to do what they're doing. It is the ministry's policy that has directed the LHINs to do what they're doing. It is the Premier's responsibility to set that right.

1050

One more time, to the Premier: Will you stand up and will you say that you will stand with these seniors and people with disabilities, and you will set right what has been done wrong, that you will restore those services to the people who are here and who depend on those services for their independence, for their safety, and for their health?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The people in the gallery are exactly the people with whom I stand. What I say to them is that we are working very hard to make sure that you get the support that you need. I know that there may be a change happening, and what we are trying to do is to make sure that people get the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week care that they need. There is a change that is being made, but our intention is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock. I apologize for not catching this earlier. Direct your questions, comments and answers to me.

New question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, 162 families in Welland received devastating news that they will be laid off, as Energex Tube has decided to idle its operations. Like many families across this province, they will be looking for work this spring and wondering whether or not they're going to find any.

Over the past week, the Premier insisted that the Liberal status quo is working when it comes to jobs. What does she have to say to the families that have now

lost their jobs in Welland this week?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that it's always a blow when a company makes a decision and there is job loss. My heart goes out to the workers and their families. But what I will say is that we will do everything in our power to make sure that those workers have the opportunity to make the transition to new employment and to new retraining.

Beyond that, we are working with companies who are coming into the province and we are working with companies that are expanding their job creation. That's the work that will make the economy stronger into the future. We're not going to stop that work. We're going to continue that work, because it's creating jobs, including working with communities to invest in infrastructure. But my heart goes out to the people in this particular instance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is no doubt that manufacturers are facing challenges all over North America, but the Premier's response ignores the problem and suggests that everything that they're doing over there is actually working. Instead of targeted approaches to help business that are hiring people or investing here in Ontario, she's defending loopholes and giveaways that hand millions of dollars to companies that then outsource jobs. Instead of working to get electricity rates under control, she insists that sky-high salaries, bloated agencies, and subsidized electricity exports actually make sense. Does the Premier really think that her plans are working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have created more than 400,000 net new jobs since 2009—100,000 new jobs last year. If the leader of the third party, underneath her rhetoric, is asking me is whether we're going to support the \$2.5-billion scheme that she would like to bring

forward, the scheme that was adopted by President Barack Obama and then rejected by President Barack Obama because it wasn't working, the scheme that in many jurisdictions has been shown to not work and to actually spread money in places where jobs were already being created in a very non-discriminatory way, if she's asking if we would take that reckless path, no, we will not. We will continue to work with businesses to do that in a targeted and strategic way, and to help them expand and create the jobs that we know are the future of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in this province and have not been replaced, and the Premier well knows it. Families losing a paycheque this month deserve better from their government. Instead of a plan to help them with change that rewards actual job creation and cleans up the mess in our electricity system, they see a government that once again is focused on the challenges of the Liberal Party, scrambling to plug holes left by departing ministers and shoring up vulnerable MPPs.

Why is this government more concerned about saving the jobs of MPPs from Oakville and Thunder Bay than thousands of Ontarians losing theirs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the leader of the third party is pinning her hopes on her job creator tax credit scheme, but it has been discredited virtually right across North America. Barack Obama considered it; he proposed a similar 10% tax credit. But at the end of the day, he dropped it because his experts were telling him that it wouldn't work, that it would be abused, as it has been in a number of states. It had practically no effect, according to the NPR editorial they had on it. Many people in Congress and the Senate said that they should be cautious about it because, quite frankly, it doesn't work.

Our finance ministry has estimated that it would cost more than \$2.5 billion a year. In fact, the Jobs and Prosperity Council rejected it—the Jobs and Prosperity Council that had Jim Stanford, the respected economist from Unifor, as part of that committee.

I don't understand why they're pinning their hopes on a failed tax credit that is a giveaway where evidence shows that 92% of the jobs are going to be created anyway.

PAN AM GAMES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I can tell you that the status quo isn't working for hundreds of thousands of people who are underemployed and unemployed in the province of Ontario.

My question is to the Premier. People in this province are also concerned that their tax dollars aren't being respected. They were told the original cost for security for the Pan Am Games was supposed to be \$113 million. Then the cost suddenly jumped to \$239 million.

My question is a simple one: Where is the accountability?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party may know, the minister offered a technical briefing for opposition members and, unfortunately, your member wasn't able to be there.

It's very important that everyone who wants to ask a question about the Pan/Parapan Am Games has all the information about the procurement process that was gone through in term of security, has all the information about the transportation costs and understands that it is our obligation to make sure that the security of the Pan/Parapan Am Games is the very best it can be to protect all of the attendees, whether they're coaches, whether they're athletes or whether they're tourists. People are going to be coming to the Pan/Parapan Am Games for this amazing event. We need to make sure the security is the best it can be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, after hearing about soaring costs, people are now learning that a US firm with a history of violations and fines here in Ontario has been awarded the Pan Am Games security contract. Was the Premier aware of the history of violations and fines before this contract was awarded?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, had the leader of the third party's colleague been able to attend the technical briefing, she would have known that for this process, we were relying on the expertise of the OPP. It has been a process that has been led by the OPP. It hink the OPP inspector, Mike McDonell from the integrated security unit—I'm just going to quote him: "The government conducted a fair, open and transparent process" overseen by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner. Mike McDonell went on to say, "The contract was awarded to the firm with the strongest bid and demonstrated experience in large-scale security initiatives while meeting all the required private security parameters throughout the games."

Mr. Speaker, we are putting our faith in the experts on this file because we must be assured that the security at the Pan/Parapan Am Games is the best it can be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I asked the Premier about is: When did she know about the fact that this contract was being awarded to an American company that has a history of violations and fines here in Ontario? When did she know that that contract was being awarded? That was the question I asked.

In light of these revelations, will the Premier now do the right thing and call on the Auditor General to take a look at the Pan Am security contracts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: All four members of the RFP selection committee for private security services for the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games are members of the OPP and serve with the integrated security unit. I am not

going to interfere in that process. I am not a security expert and I don't believe the leader of the third party is a security expert. We are going to leave that to the experts because we need to make sure that everyone who comes to the Pan/Parapan Am Games—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry—Prescott Russell will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Nepean-Carleton.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Prince Edward–Hastings; it actually could have been his warning.

New question.

1100

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier knows that the Pan Am Games are a scandal under this current minister. She requires him to report to her biweekly for lack of confidence, and she has allowed TO2015 to create a new communications nanny position to mitigate the minister's ongoing blooper reel, yet somehow the minister dodged a bullet with the latest cabinet shuffle.

When are the costs of retaining this minister too high, Premier? You just lectured the third party leader that it's important to know all the details about the Pan Am Games. Why don't you tell taxpayers—today, right now—what you're paying Neala Barton?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I spoke yesterday about the reality that the human resources hiring—the issues to do with human resources—are being handled by TO2015. The federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government are all working together, making those HR decisions. We've had a conversation about the reality that this minister is providing technical briefings and opening up the process so that the members across the way can ask all of the technical questions that they want, and can have that information.

The reality is that this is a complex, large games. There are many moving parts. The venues are spread around the region so that other communities—like Barrie, like Hamilton and across the region—will have an opportunity to have a legacy as a result of these games. I hope that the member opposite takes the opportunity to get all the information from those technical briefings.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I was happy to be at the technical briefings. Unfortunately, the minister wasn't. No doubt

the Premier knows every decision through her biweekly reports, so pleading ignorance is seriously amateur hour.

Let me help you out, Premier. Your Liberal friend Neala Barton is making more than you are. She's buying when you go to dinner, Premier, because this scandal-hopper is netting between \$250,000 and \$300,000 in taxpayer dollars. All this for Neala Barton, a Liberal staffer who's been there for eHealth, for McGuinty's and Redford's resignations, and now for Pan Am.

Premier, you can save that money by just removing the source of the problem today. Now that you know the cost of Liberal cronyism, will you intervene immediately and replace the minister and Barton?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Chan: This member can, day after day, attack the games, but at committee on Monday he said that the Parapan American Games should combine with the Pan Am Games—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West is warned—

Mr. Rod Jackson: Read the Hansard, Minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and the member for Barrie will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Clearly.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker. He suggested that para-athletes from all over the world—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You should have been fired vesterday.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Read the Hansard. Get your facts straight. The least you could do is to get that right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Barrie will come to order—second time. The member for Nepean—Carleton will come to order. Maybe the third time; I'm not sure.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): But if you question my seriousness, keep going.

Hon. Michael Chan: On a day where we will be hosting Paralympic athletes, he lacks the understanding to realize that para-athletes are world-class competitors who should be celebrated—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Shame on you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on

Hon. Michael Chan: His comments are not only arrogant and ignorant, but aim to destroy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

The member will withdraw.

Hon. Michael Chan: I withdraw, Speaker.

These comments are misguided and aim to destroy the spirit of para-athletes all over the world who compete in sports. He owes all para-athletes an explanation for this terrible comment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. *Interjection.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, if you wouldn't mind getting into your seat so I can tell you to stop—but maybe I'll tell you to stop now.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, the Pan Am security contract just keeps getting worse. We're now learning that the US firm this government selected to provide security for the Pan Am Games pled guilty to violating its licence during the G20 summit and was fined \$45,000 here in Ontario. Was the Premier or her minister aware of these violations, the guilty plea and the fine before this contract was awarded?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, let me just start by saying that I'm very excited to be in my new role. I want to thank the Premier for giving me the opportunity to serve as Ontario's Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I also very much look forward to working with my colleagues the member from Leeds—Grenville and the member from London West so that we can work together and find ways to make our province even safer and more secure for every single Ontarian.

I'm new on the file so I'm learning all the ins and outs, but I know one thing for sure, and that is that our government is developing a world-class Pan American Games for 2015 right here in our province. These games are going to be hosting world-class athletes from the Americas. They're going to be welcoming tourists from around the world. We are going to work with our security experts to make sure that these games are one of the most secure games around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the minister for no answer again.

How can this government have even considered a bid from a security firm that has broken laws in our province specific to the provisions of our security services? There's even a question about whose bid was lower and who had saved Ontarians money. The company that you didn't pick was Ontarian.

Can the Premier or the minister explain why this government awarded the contract for the Pan/Parapan Am security to a US firm with a checkered security history that was charging more, when there were qualified firms here in Ontario with clean track records?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the security of the games is a very serious issue, and we must rely on experts like the Ontario Provincial Police to make a decision as to what is the best form and who is the best one to deliver security. In matters of security, armchair quarterbacks are not welcome. That's not what we want to be doing. That's why we have an integrated unit at the Ontario Provincial Police that is responsible for contracting the security. They are responsible for all the details around the security. I will listen to their advice any single day over any member in this House, from the government or from the opposition.

Let the OPP do their job and make sure the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games are world-class games right here

in the province of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. I've heard the minister speaking about our government's record investments in public transit, and the people in my riding of Vaughan have certainly taken notice.

My constituents rely on GO trains and buses to get to and from work on a daily basis. They travel between school, friends, families, homes, and for a social evening downtown or in my riding. Vaughan residents recognize that public transit investments make transit a better choice for commuting. They reduce congestion on our roads and contribute to a better quality of life for all Ontario families, especially those in my riding.

1110

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please speak to the investments in my riding that were recently announced when it comes to GO services?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a great pleasure to rise, and I want to thank my friend the MPP for Vaughan for his advocacy and his leadership on transit. We, as you may know, recently announced the extension of a morning and an afternoon train on the Barrie line, and we will be increasing that from 10 cars to 12 cars. That will add 320 additional seats or, if you want to look at it this way, take 320 more cars off just on that one addition alone.

We will actually be adding two new weekly morning trains on the Barrie line, from Maple to Union Station, which will create more capacity. This is in addition to a plethora of other investments we are making in different forms of transit, and the subway, which is provoking great development right now in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre.

I want to thank the member for his leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the minister for the update regarding the all-important Barrie GO line. This announcement is great news for my community, for the people of Vaughan. Increased GO service has long been necessary, and I'm delighted that our government is committed to taking these important steps. I have been and residents in my community have also been troubled to hear about the plan, or the lack thereof, that's being suggested by the opposition and by the third party. The Leader of the Opposition has suggested that he would be making the kinds of investments that would directly and adversely impact the communities of Vaughan, those across York region and elsewhere. My understanding is that his proposals would almost cease completely the infrastructure spending in communities outside of the Toronto core, like mine. And from what I've seen, the NDP has no plan at all when it comes to transit.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Transportation: Can you please outline the investments that our government is making in communities like Vaughan and across Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have at this point invested \$9.1 billion in GO services alone, and this is important, because the investments that Metrolinx make have impacts all across the province. For my friend from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the new Minister of Municipal Affairs, the cars are made there; and for the member for Barrie, all the tunnels for the Eglinton line are being made in Barrie, Ontario.

But it's also important to note that we're the only party committed to 2% of GDP, which is 10 times as much as the opposition party. We're still trying to figure out where the third party is on infrastructure, because their history in government is to spend 10 cents on transit for every dollar that we spend, and that doesn't buy you a bus; it merely fills a pothole.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. This morning, I have a large group of financial services people tuning in to carefully listen to your answer. They're not interested at this moment in what you have to say about the fall economic statement. What they're interested in is what you had to say last May during the budget announcement. Let's review.

Last spring, you were told by the Ministry of Finance you were "not on track to meet the 2012 budget deficit targets." A few days later, you issued a news release that stated, "The government is on track to meet deficit targets outlined in the 2012 budget."

Premier, why did you tell the financial community, the bond-rating agencies, this Legislature and the public one thing when you knew the complete opposite to be true?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite seems to fail to understand that while recommendations and proposals and initiatives are put in place, while conditions change by market forces around the world, a leadership government must take action, and as a result of the actions we've taken, we reduced spending. We took the initiatives necessary to recalibrate so that we could in fact stay on target. The bond-rating agencies and all the others that you make mention of, we do speak to as a result of those results.

As a consequence, we're on track to balance the books by 2017-18, and we do so because of the actions that we've taken to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So, Premier, conditions changed in a couple of days from when you were told one thing and said the other. You're not giving us the facts. You were told one thing, but you went out and told the public and this Legislature the complete opposite.

You've got a \$4.5-billion gap and you tell the bondrating folks, "All is well." This is like déjà vu all over again. Last year, throughout the gas plant scandal, you told us the cancellation would cost \$40 million, but it took the Auditor General to tell us what really happened. It was \$1.1 billion. You deleted emails, and the OPP had to get called in.

There's a pattern happening here, Premier. When you get caught, you delete or, in my case last week, you try to stop information from being made public. Instead of writing a jobs plan, you spend your time keeping the facts from getting out. Exactly what is it that you're hiding?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The members opposite have had a history of hiding the facts. That is why there was a \$5.6-billion hole in the budget when they were last in power.

We brought forward measures of transparency and accountability, to the point now where the C.D. Howe Institute and others are saying that Ontario is one of the highest-rated provinces and governments by way of transparency and disclosure and integrity in the numbers that we present. As a result of that, we've become the leanest government in Canada. We've beaten our deficit targets year over year, and we're continuing to do so. We're investing in jobs and investing in the economy, to create greater economic growth and more jobs, something that that party opposite is actually threatening.

As a result of what he has just mentioned—monthsold information that we had already exposed and put out there for all to see and consume—we are taking actions to ensure that we balance the books, and we'll continue to do so.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to first congratulate the minister on his recent appointment and wish him well.

The minister had a private member's bill that would require 60% Canadian content for transit vehicles purchased by municipalities. My first question to the minister is very simple: Will the minister introduce this bill as his first—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you brought it back to the ministry, because I would have ruled it out of order. But now that you've brought it back as to whether or not he will introduce certain legislation, it's fine, so I'll carry on.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I want to thank—the member, thank you very much for the question.

As he is aware, as a minister, I'm not able to bring private members' bills forward, but what I can tell you on a specific issue is clearly this: We have made a strong commitment—and I would thank the member opposite from North Bay. Both of us, in our previous lives and in previous times here in this Legislature, introduced private members' legislation on this particular issue. I, personally, as a northern member, find it as very important. I think it's key to part of the revitalization of the forest industry, which has already begun to occur, I would suggest. We have some great news in northwestern Ontario, certainly in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. This piece, I believe, would help that.

But I will say that paramount to us are the issues related to safety, when it comes to this particular issue. We feel like we've done some pretty good work. The previous minister has done a tremendous amount of great work, in terms of lining up that support to ensure we're meeting all of our people and stakeholders who are interested in this issue.

On a go-forward basis, there is more I will say in the supplementary. There's another important piece I feel it's necessary to share with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister knows how important Canadian content is in mass transit vehicles for Thunder Bay's Bombardier plant. He said, "The regulations called for in the proposed bill would help protect these jobs and encourage future job growth in the mass transit sector."

With his appointment as a minister, his private member's bill has now essentially died on the order table and will not be up for debate tomorrow. My question is, will the minister commit today to making his bill for Canadian content in mass transit vehicles a government bill and a government priority?

Hon. Bill Mauro: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I'm just going to provide you with some feedback. This is why we tightrope-walk when we have these changes and things that have happened the way they have.

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The instruction I'm going to leave with you is to try to make sure that the question you ask of the minister is directed to ministry responsibilities. I know that there was a little bit of weaving back and forth, both in the answer and in the question. I'm glad that the minister has punted it to somebody who probably has the responsibility within his particular domain.

I'm trying to offer some guidance, because it is a difficult matter, and I appreciate what the members want to say and do. I'm just offering all of us a reminder that when we do offer those kinds of questions, they're directed directly to the ministry's responsibility, and I thank you for that.

I thank the minister for giving it to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I too want to welcome my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan to cabinet. I know the Premier is very, very well aware of the new minister's views, and I'm sure that was weighed in her thinking, that Canadian content and the economic implications of our infrastructure investments are a priority for this government.

Right now, we have worked very effectively. The downside of being too protective is that we hurt Canadian companies competing in the large US market.

But right now, we go back seven years, formerly MPP Mauro as a city councillor, in his previous life, advocated—this is a seven-year campaign that my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been on, so I don't think it's going to disappear any time.

Hon. Bill Mauro: It's 1,200 jobs.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This would be 1,200 jobs.

We will continue to work with the third party and in this Legislature to realize the maximum benefit of all our infrastructure investments in each part of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Here in Ontario, we should be proud that we have a ministry that is dedicated to providing children and youth with services and supports they need. In my community of Scarborough–Rouge River, I meet families and vulnerable youth every day. They share stories of how the work of our government is helping to make their lives better.

Speaker, doing what we can to ensure the well-being of all children and youth in the province is not only important to us now, but it will define the quality of men and women who will live in Ontario in the future. Giving a child a boost and the supports they need will lead them in the right direction and provide them opportunities to make the right decisions in life. An investment in our children and youth today is an investment in the province's future.

Can the minister tell us about the work that the ministry is doing to support children and youth in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for not only the question today but also his regular and ongoing advocacy for children and youth not only in his riding but across the province. Today, for everyone to know, we're celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and we'll be having a little celebration later and some cake. Everybody is invited to join us later today.

I'm proud that our government took the initiative to create this ministry and ensure that children and youth throughout the province are properly represented. As stated by our first minister, "By focusing on positive results for kids from prenatal health through early adulthood, we have a unique opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Ontario's young people." That statement remains valid today.

I've heard that the party opposite would abolish the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. That would be a mistake. For the past 10 years, thanks to tireless work, we've made terrific gains.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The minister is correct. It would be wrong to abolish this ministry—despite calls from some members in this House. In Scarborough–Rouge River, there has been a reduction in crime and gang activities since 2004. I personally attribute that to the actions of this government by providing children and youth better options and greater opportunity.

From the increased supports for youth leaving care or increased investments for special needs services or the many initiatives in the poverty reduction strategy, vulnerable children and youth in my community have greatly benefited from focus by a dedicated ministry.

Speaker, the 10th anniversary of the creation of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is a milestone that we should all celebrate. As I said earlier, an investment in our children and youth today is an investment in our province's future. The best way to justify this ministry to those who think it should be abolished is by reminding them of the major accomplishments made in the past 10 years.

Speaker, can the minister tell us—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, thank you for the follow-up to that question. I can most certainly speak to the many accomplishments this ministry has had over the last 10 years, because they have been many.

We introduced the province's first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy, with the Ontario children's benefit as its focal point. We transformed the child welfare system to make it sustainable and ensure that children in Ontario will be protected for generations to come. We've dramatically increased our support for crown wards, supporting the work of the Youth Leaving Care Working Group.

We've introduced a new Special Needs Strategy, a Youth Suicide Prevention Plan, a Youth Action Plan and a new mental health strategy. Since we took action in 2003, the youth crime rate has fallen by 29%. This has been a very busy ministry.

Building on our achievements, we will continue to help children and youth in Ontario reach their full potential

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the education minister. Minister, I delivered yet another letter today asking you why you refuse to safeguard extracurricular activities for our students. You may have noticed that your teachers' collective bargaining bill sits in committee, stuck in clause-by-clause, and will stay there until you work up the courage to stand up for students.

I'll remind you again that our only ask on behalf of parents in this entire piece of legislation is to ensure that co-curricular activities are not ripped away from students, yet you continue to reject this outright. Is the threat of withdrawing support that the special interests hold over your head so strong that you cannot risk politically incurring their wrath?

Minister, you can run for election to lead a union or you can be our Minister of Education, but you can't be both.

Clean up your act, get your facts straight and support the important amendments for students and parents across this province. Will you do that today, Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The answer is the same as it was last week. When I think about what happened during the Harris years, what I remember was legislation, regulation and attempts to change funding and collective agreements in order to impose new rules of work without new compensation. In fact, they took a billion dollars out of school board funding.

I also remember that what we had during the Harris years was eight years of chaos. Kids didn't get extracurriculars. They didn't even get to go to school, because people were always on strike during their time. So, am I going to do what he suggests? Absolutely not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm still waiting to hear an answer why you could possibly reject this request outright. This is not a ploy or a tactic. This is not a game. Parents have been clear that they want their politicians to safeguard extracurricular activities come the fall. I want this, too, but I cannot do this without your help.

Minister, if this is about pride, please, I ask you, let us put our egos aside and think about what really matters: the education of our students. However, if this is about losing your political allies, please, I ask you, find the courage within yourself to stand up for what is right, rather than caving in to the special interests at the expense of the student experience in the province.

We know you were once on the side of parents. We know you can be again. Will you support this amendment and support the students of this province? For once, Minister, please stand up with us and help students get the experience they need.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I am absolutely on the side of parents and children and making sure that kids have extracurricular—and I know from a lot of experience that the best way to do that is when everybody works together.

I would like to point out that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, the French public trustees and the English Catholic trustees all want this legislation passed. ETFO, the English elementary teachers; OSSTF, the English secondary teachers; OECTA, the English Catholic teachers; AEFO, the francophone teachers—they, too, want this legislation passed.

We can all work together. It's you that can't work with anybody.

1130

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Today, busloads of seniors and caregivers from the York region are at Queen's Park. They are here because some of the most vulnerable people in the region's community living programs are about to lose the round-the-clock care that they require.

The government has been trying to put the blame on York region, saying they cannot do much, yet the Minister of Health was able to extend this in-home care by a period of one month.

Will the Premier tell the seniors and their caregivers who are here today if she is prepared to protect their health care services permanently?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure exactly where the blame has come from. I'm not blaming anyone. What I'm saying is that my understanding is that the services that have been provided in one way are going to be provided in another way, that the region of York made a business decision that they were going to get out of this particular delivery, and that the local health integration network, the Central LHIN, is going to be ensuring that every patient who currently receives service will continue to receive service.

The reality is that not all seniors were receiving 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service. We want to ensure that that is in place, that they have access to that service as they need it, where they need it, and in a timely way. That's what the change is about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let me make it clear: When it comes to frail, elderly seniors and people with disabil-

ities, 24/7 coverage by caregivers, by PSWs who know them, who know and understand their needs, is the gold standard. This is what they had.

I see it time and time again: The Liberal government can talk a good game when it comes to keeping frail, elderly, vulnerable people in their homes. They repeat "right care, right time, right places," but when cuts are being made to gold-standard programs that do just that, then their talk starts to sound like nothing more than empty words.

I ask again, is the Premier going to protect these vital, gold-standard health care services and the seniors that they support?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just repeat again: Currently, patients of the region of York's assisted community living program are being transferred to experienced providers—because I agree with the member opposite that it is important for seniors to have the care of experienced people who understand what their needs are, because if they are fragile, if they are in a precarious situation, they need to have that trained person there. They're being transferred to experienced providers who will be able to provide this service.

As of April 1, new providers will be offering that 24-hour, seven-day-a-week care on-site at all of the region of York buildings where this service was previously provided. That is what is to happen on April 1.

If there are questions about that, I will absolutely make sure that they get answered by folks in the Ministry of Health. But that's what's happening. The care is being transferred.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, we know cities have many transit options, but in northern and rural areas, roads and bridges are what are important.

We all take notice when we drive over potholes or can't get across a bridge in disrepair. Not only are roads and bridges vital to local communities, but they serve as important arteries to help Ontario's economy grow.

Ontario's small and rural municipalities have infrastructure needs that differ greatly from the urban municipalities, and I want to be assured that this government has taken those needs into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please inform the House on what is being done to address the infrastructure concerns of rural municipalities?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for a very superb question this morning.

I've had the great privilege of being Minister of Rural Affairs and getting the opportunity to travel Ontario north, south, east, and west, and meeting with my municipal colleagues, who I have a great relationship with as a former municipal councillor myself for some 18 years.

When we brought forward that \$100-million infrastructure fund for small, rural, and northern municipal-

ities—I haven't seen such enthusiasm in years as when we announced that program, and AMO and ROMA—the opportunity to engage with those fine elected officials that represent communities, oh, so well.

Just recently, on my travel on that day, we announced \$1.5 million, rehabilitating a well in Hanover—Mayor Maskell is a wonderful lady—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —upgrading sanitary sewer services in Owen Sound. Mayor Haswell—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand; you sit.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. I stand; you sit. Don't finish.

Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I'm pleased to hear the Ontario government takes the needs of small and rural municipalities very seriously.

Rural Ontarians have raised concerns over stable and predictable infrastructure funding. Having been involved as a consulting engineer for over 30 years at the community level, I know first-hand the importance of predictable funding. Rural communities need a full range of public infrastructure, from roads and bridges to water supply networks, to protect their quality of life and foster new economic development. With predictable funding, municipalities can budget efficiently and develop long-term repair plans for aging infrastructure, guaranteeing the maintenance of critical infrastructure for years to come.

Can the minister update the House on what our government is doing to ensure municipalities have stable, predictable funding for infrastructure?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Again, I want to thank the member for Ottawa–Orléans for the supplementary. I'm sure he won't want a late show for later today because I'll provide a very full answer.

In rural Ontario, we've been consulting widely, and I've had great discussions with the Premier, the Minister of Finance, and my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. We're hoping to get a permanent program in the budget, whenever it's delivered in the weeks to come. I know there's great anticipation.

Minister Murray and I consulted with over 500 municipal officials, one of the widest consultations ever in the province of Ontario, because we want to get that permanent structure right. In order to get it right, you listen to municipal leaders right across the province of Ontario, and we're waiting for the budget, because it will be a good-news day, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. On January 29 of this year, it was announced that three teams were shortlisted to design, finance and maintain

the Milton District Hospital expansion project. These three firms are to be invited to respond to a request for proposals for the expansion project, whose start began in 2001 under a PC government. In 2002, I procured the land for the project, but after the McGuinty Liberals were elected in 2003, the expansion was cancelled.

It was only during the 2007 election that the start process was begun anew, from scratch. Then on August 25, 2011, another election year, the minister said "... this money has been allocated.... It has gone through our treasury board."

Premier, your Minister of Health promised that the Milton hospital would be expanded by 2016. When will the RFP be released to the three approved consortiums?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Infrastructure is going to want to speak to the specifics of this in the supplementary, but what I will say is that it's very interesting that at the end of question period we get questions that have to do with spending dollars. At the beginning of question period from the Conservatives, all we hear about is what they are going to cut and what they are going to slash. In fact, when the Leader of the Opposition asks a question, it is always about cutting and slashing, cutting people out of jobs, not investing in infrastructure, not investing in building hospitals and schools.

Our plan is and has been to make those necessary investments. We have built hospitals. We have built schools. We have built roads. We have built transit. We are going to continue to build this province, Mr. Speaker, and they would cut it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently, the Premier didn't hear the first part of the questions from our party.

Premier, Milton has grown to three times the size that it was in 1987. The town of Milton is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario. It's unacceptable that such a dynamic community as Milton should have its primary health care needs served by a hospital that has to be expanded to triple its size to serve the town.

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Under your government's watch, election time has become hospital funding announcement time in Ontario. As we near an election, I would like to ask you on behalf of the people of Ontario—Premier, the RFP is ready to go. It has been ready to go for two months. Why is it not released? You're playing politics with this issue.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. *Interjection*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member opposite is a most curious gentleman. He has provoked great curiosity in me as a minister because, for some reason, the member opposite voted against the expansion of that hospital. I'm a bit bewildered about the member's behaviour because he voted against it.

Right now we have 12 hospitals under construction, of 39 which this government has now built. The member opposite, as you know, supported a government that closed 28 hospitals—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm trying to speak here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will come to order, please. The member from Burlington will come to order.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When you close 28 hospitals, and you're criticizing a government that's building 39, there is a word for it. "Politics" might be a polite word for when you vote against your own hospital and then support it. There are some unparliamentary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Lack of winter road maintenance across Ontario has caused havoc on Ontario's highways for many winters. Some 76% of people in a recent poll agreed; even the minister has said that privatization of snow removal probably needs a rethink.

In the meantime, contractors have been sounding alarm bells that the ministry hasn't been issuing enough funding to clear the highways properly. So the ministry is issuing fines, yet the minister has refused to release the amount of the fines.

What's holding the ministry back? Release the amounts of the fines, where they're fined and when they're fined. Let's see: Is it the contractors or is it the ministry that is responsible for terrible snow removal in this province?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Our greatest concern—and, I'm sure, that of our contractors—is the safety of our roads. We have worked very carefully and closely with our contractors to maintain those high standards. We added almost \$10 million in northern Ontario alone so that those contractors could put 50 vehicles out.

The member opposite is quite right: Those contracts are now all outsourced, out of the ideological zeal of a previous government that thought that the private sector did everything better. Those standards have not changed.

The member has read in the media, as I have, that there are penalties when contractors don't meet those standards. We will not compromise the public's safety, and we insist. That being said, most of our contractors are meeting those standards, and we look forward to working with them.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Welland on a point of order.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to rise on a point of order to clarify the question from the member from Essex. You stated that the question of the member from Essex should not have been directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs when, in fact, the private member's bill referenced places requirements on municipalities when purchasing mass transit vehicles. I'd like to provide you with a copy of this bill for your reference.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for the point of order, and I will try to provide some clarity. The concern I was trying to express was that of a reference of a private member's bill to the minister, and that the ministry, at that point—and anyone in cabinet—has the right to give it to the ministry that they require to get it to, to provide an answer.

That said, it was a judgment call that I made, that I thought it might not be germane to the ministry. I confess that I was more concerned with the fact that it was a private member's bill that was being referenced, and that it was not to be spoken to through cabinet, because cabinet doesn't have any jurisdiction over private members' bills.

I hope that's clearer than what I tried to talk about last time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to get a moment without a heckle.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I'm in the right business. You're the ones who know how to do that. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

VISITOR

Hon. David Zimmer: Earlier, Speaker, I neglected to introduce Yang Kon Kim, who is the vice-president of the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all of our guests.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the residents in Nepean–Carleton to talk of a little boy I had the pleasure of meeting last Friday. His name is Kaiden. Last week, I met with his mother, Helen, who runs a program called Kaiden's Care Kits.

Kaidenis pretty interesting. He's four and a half years old and he has cystic fibrosis. Kaiden's mother, when she found out that Kaiden had cystic fibrosis, decided she was going to take the effort upon herself to make sure that other children born with CF would receive care kits on what to do when mom and dad find out in the early days after a child's birth that they have CF.

Helen was quite amazing, but I was really impressed with Kaiden. He came in and he was full of life. You wouldn't know that Kaiden was sick with cystic fibrosis. He was vibrant, full of life. He was playing. He reminds me of every little kid I get to meet that plays with my little girl, Victoria.

Kaiden's mom came in to see me because of an issue that's been raised here frequently at Queen's Park, the funding for Kalydeco, so that he will have a normal life as he grows up, or as normal as possible. I stand here today to add my voice with our deputy leader, Christine Elliott, with my colleague, a former health minister, Jim Wilson, and with long-time MPP Ted Arnott, to say that it's time that the government of Ontario thought really long and hard on how they can actually start to fund this drug. I want to make sure that kids like Kaiden in Ontario have the hope to live as healthily as they possibly can.

And to Kaiden: I know you're at home watching. Everybody here at the Legislature says hello.

KINGSVILLE FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today to promote and to invite Ontarians from across the province to the first-ever Kingsville Folk Music Festival. With the town of Kingsville as the official partner, the festival will take place between August 8 and 10 at Lakeside Park, at 315 Queen St., in beautiful Kingsville, Ontario, nestled on the north shore of Lake Erie. With its rich musical history and historic pavilion, Lakeside Park could be one of the most picturesque festival sites in Canada.

The Kingsville Folk Music Festival is the first event of its kind to be held west of London in southwestern Ontario, and with five stages and over 30 national and international performers, the festival is modelled after the most successful and longest running Canadian music festivals in Edmonton, Vancouver, Winnipeg, and the Stan Rogers Folk Festival. With musical talents like Bruce Cockburn, David Francey, Fred Penner, Ron Hynes, J.P. Cormier, Valdy and Jane Siberry, they certainly have an exhaustive list of talents that will be there.

Founded in 2012 by John and Michele Law and incorporated as an Ontario non-profit, the Sun Parlour Folk Music Society exists to promote the live performances of folk music in our region.

I want to congratulate the organizers of this greatly anticipated event. They are Marjan Willett, Michelle Fortier, Sharon Stasso, Bonnie Hyatt, Tom Taylor, Lillian Wauthier, Michele and John Law and Tina Wells.

It's going to be a wonderful time in Kingsville during the folk festival, and I invite everyone to come down to the region and enjoy folk music in southwestern Ontario.

BANGLADESH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm pleased to rise in the House today in recognition of March 26 as Bangladesh Independence Day. I also want to recognize the tremendous contributions by the Bangladeshi Canadian community.

The Bengali community has a strong presence in many communities, but especially in my own riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. I had the opportunity to join the Bengali Social Club of Scarborough for an event at Scarborough Village not so long ago, and I was impressed with the families and their commitment to building a strong and vibrant community in Scarborough.

I can tell you that the community is a vibrant one and contributes greatly, not only to the diversity and success of my community, but across Ontario.

Today, I hope my colleagues will join me in recognizing the Independence Day of Bangladesh, and join with the Bangladeshi community in celebrating this very special day.

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: The 2014 Loving to Learn contest wrapped up recently in Waterloo region, and it asked a very important question: What makes a teacher a really great teacher?

If you'd allow me, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share the story of Audrey Guo of Northlake Woods Public School in Waterloo, who told the story of her relationship with her teacher, Margo Foster-Cohen. Audrey says:

"Mrs. Cohen has the power to understand children as if she's a child as well. She's so kind and funny, you'll start warming up to her like a ... friend that you've known for a long time."

I'm pleased to report that Guo was declared the winner of the kindergarten to grade 4 category, and she will, without a doubt, have a proud teacher waiting for her when she goes back to school.

Foster-Cohen said, "One of the good principles of teaching is to have high expectations for your students. Because my experience is that they will work and often exceed those expectations.

"When teaching, I always keep the structure and support of my lesson in mind, but above that, I value student involvement."

Foster-Cohen has been teaching for over 20 years, and over those 20 years she has without a doubt touched many more lives than just Audrey's.

I'd like to congratulate them both for their respective achievements, and I just want to add that this is the type of relationship that we hope all of our students get to have with their teachers. That's certainly the type of teacher all our students deserve.

AGNES MACPHAIL AWARD

Mr. Michael Prue: Each year at this time, I rise right after the Agnes Macphail Award is given out in the former borough of East York to commend wonderful

people who, through their very hard work, make our community so much better.

The Agnes Macphail Award was established 21 years ago in the former borough of East York to honour the birth, on March 24, of the first Canadian woman elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa in 1921, and also the first of two women to be elected to this House in 1943.

This year's winner is Sheila Lacroix. Sheila Lacroix has worked in our community for many, many years. Her formal training and her job is as a librarian, but her true worth to our community is not so much the job that she does during the day, but the job that she does the rest of the time. She is with the Canadian Federation of University Women, and in that role she has helped to hand out scholarships to young women, she has helped the poor through the advocacy of that group, she has helped with political lobbying, and with taking action, including putting up signs during the last provincial election, asking people to ask their politicians what they were doing about poverty. She is also very active in the United Church in Leaside, and in the YWCA women's shelter.

As the award recipient, she received \$2,000, which she donated to a scholarship, in part, and to the YWCA to look after women who are in desperate need of housing.

I thank her very much for her efforts in our community. Congratulations to this year's winner.

PAKISTAN REPUBLIC DAY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, Pakistan Republic Day is celebrated by more than 300,000 proud Ontarians of Pakistani origin. It commemorates the 74th anniversary of the historic Lahore Resolution adopted on March 23, 1940. The Lahore Resolution formed the basis of the constitution of modern-day Pakistan.

To commemorate the event, a 60-metre monument in the shape of a minaret was built at Iqbal Park, the spot at which the resolution was adopted.

Across Ontario, Canadians of Pakistani origin celebrate Pakistan Republic Day with family and friends, and at community functions.

In Mississauga, the Canada Pakistan Friendship Association brought the community together at the South Common Community Centre in Erin Mills. We were pleased to be joined by Pakistan's consul general, Mr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria.

1510

Ontarians of Pakistani descent are passionate Canadians whose contribution to commerce, the professions, our communities and our civic and public life enrich our province with the skills, knowledge and passion of a people whose community commitment runs deep.

Pakistan Republic Day celebrations provide an opportunity to celebrate Ontario's diversity and rich heritage in communities all across the province. Our strength lies in our diversity.

Pakistan—Canada zindabad! Shukria.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: The Kemptville and Alfred agricultural colleges have served eastern Ontario with distinction for almost a century and can take much of the credit for the region's success in the agri-food business. Two weeks ago, I was shocked to hear the news that this government was closing the Alfred and Kemptville colleges without any prior public consultation.

The community uproar was immediate and, I believe, caught this government by surprise. Their first strategy was to blame Guelph university, which is trying to deal with the provincial cuts to post-secondary education. No one believed the Premier and the Minister of Colleges and Universities that they were not part of this decision.

Now for some good news: The Alfred college is likely to receive a lifeline from other francophone institutions; however, no effort has been made by this government to save the much larger Kemptville college. In fact, when I contacted St. Lawrence College on Wednesday, they were as shocked as everybody else.

The minister has now asked the two neighbouring colleges to look into saving Kemptville, but this is an empty request without proper time for a response.

So I ask the Premier to immediately place a two-year reprieve on the closure of the Kemptville and Alfred campuses to allow time to investigate and develop a plan for the orderly transfer of assets, programs and students. Do the right thing, Premier: As the Minister of Agriculture, stand up for our youth and the future of agricultural excellence in eastern Ontario. It is time for this government to take some leadership in this area.

EPILEPSY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I stand in the House today to welcome the epilepsy contingent that was here earlier today and to announce Purple Day.

Cassidy Megan was diagnosed with epilepsy and wanted to raise awareness because she noticed that her classmates didn't know what epilepsy was. Purple Day, named after the internationally recognized colour for epilepsy, lavender, quickly became a global event. Beginning in her home province of Nova Scotia, Megan set aside March 26, 2008, as a day to raise awareness for epilepsy.

Purple Day increases awareness, reduces stigma and empowers individuals living with epilepsy to take action in their communities. Canadians are encouraged to learn more about epilepsy throughout the month of March, culminating with Purple Day on March 26.

There are hundreds of ambassadors in 70 countries worldwide who will be participating in the 2014 Purple Day activities by wearing purple or getting involved in Purple Day awareness or fundraising events.

The Purple Day Act, Bill C-278, was successfully passed through parliamentary readings and received royal assent on June 28 and serves to educate the public and empower the epilepsy community.

March 26 and the pins we are all wearing are meant to help fight the stigma attached to seizure disorders.

EPILEPSY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Today MPPs are wearing purple ribbons, and some of us are even wearing purple clothing, in honour of Purple Day to promote epilepsy awareness. Purple Day, founded in 2008, is meant to spark discussions about the disorder and to help fight the stigma attached to seizure disorders by educating the public and empowering the epilepsy community.

In my riding of Whitby-Oshawa, we are fortunate to have our local organization, Epilepsy Durham Region, with their amazing CEO, Dianne McKenzie, who offers support and information for people living with epilepsy and their families, caregivers and friends. They run a variety of education and support programs ranging from their Thinking About Epilepsy grade 5 program to providing employment support for people living with epilepsy.

Today, we are lucky to have representatives from Epilepsy Ontario here at Queen's Park to update MPPs on the education, support, research and advocacy work that they do on behalf of those living with epilepsy in On-

tario.

Thank you to all of the members who are wearing their purple ribbons in support, and thank you to Epilepsy Ontario and Epilepsy Durham Region for the great work that you do across Ontario to improve the lives of people living with epilepsy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all mem-

bers for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO BIKE MONTH ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LE MOIS DE LA BICYCLETTE EN ONTARIO

Mr. Delaney moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 182, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Ontario Bike Month / Projet de loi 182, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois de la bicyclette en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this bill proclaims the month of June in each year as Ontario Bike Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a short statement.

394557 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

> HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT **ACT (CLEARING VEHICLES** OF SNOW AND ICE), 2014 **LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT** LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ENLÈVEMENT DE LA NEIGE ET DE LA GLACE DES VÉHICULES)

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit driving a motor vehicle on a highway with a dangerous accumulation of snow or ice / Projet de loi 183, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire la conduite sur une voie publique de véhicules automobiles ayant une accumulation dangereuse de neige ou de glace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of

the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit driving a motor vehicle on a highway if snow or ice has accumulated on the motor vehicle or a vehicle or trailer drawn by the motor vehicle in a manner that would pose a danger to other motor vehicles on the highway.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98, private members' public business on Thursday, March 27, 2014, be limited to consideration of ballot items 82 and 83, and the time allotted to private members' public business be adjusted accordingly; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items number 1 and 4 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1520

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm going to wait until our page, Nick, comes up and joins me for this one.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicles' emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2013 that they are no longer among the major domestic emitters of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails', which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I am going to affix my signature and send it down with Nick to the table.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition. The same petition was read in yesterday, so I would just like to read the "Be it resolved," because it's a very long petition.

Be it resolved "That the Minister of Education intervene to locate an underutilized secondary school building

in the neighbourhood of Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York and Leslieville that may be sold to or shared with both French school boards (public and Catholic) so that each may open their respective French secondary school (grades 7-12) by September 2014 and so that French students no longer must choose between travelling great distances to attend a French secondary school or giving up their French education in favour of a local English school and so that they may have the same benefit as their English counterparts, the right to attend a local secondary school in their neighbourhood."

I'm in agreement. I would affix my signature and send it with page Mustfah.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to the next petition, I want to acknowledge the member and thank him for that. You do not have to read an entire petition if it's exceptionally long, to provide time for others, so I appreciate the member for doing so.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will recognize the member from Lanark—Lanark—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come on—Addington? You're going to make me suffer, aren't you?

Mr. Randy Hillier: No. Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and-

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I also want to thank the member from Beaches for making that petition short, as well—or shorter than it could be.

Speaker, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's signed by over 600 people and it states:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition and will give it to page Caroline.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have a petition signed by the good folks of my riding. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are not legally required to declare their consent on organ/tissue donation; and

"Whereas every Ontarian is issued a health card; and

"Whereas as of November 2013, there are 1,474 Ontarians on the transplant waiting list. Many will die waiting. One donor can save up to eight lives and improve the quality of life for 75 others through the gift of tissue. 95% of Canadians support organ donations. 50% to 60% are willing to donate. In Ontario only 22% have registered consent. Our request is fiscally beneficial as it reduces health care costs, saves lives and improves quality of life;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Legislative Assembly is asked to initiate law, or reintroduce Bill 58 2012, in which a health card will not be issued to any person of at least 16 years of age or renew a health card of such a person unless the person has completed a declaration, in the required form, that forms part of the card and that specifies whether or not the person consents to having his or her organs or tissue used for transplant purposes after the person's death."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and I will give it to page Samantha.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme" disease "diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed

diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my name in support.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

"Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board:

"Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

"Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006."

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I particularly have pleasure in sharing this petition with regard to Esbriet, from the Mildmay area, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the desk with Justin.

1530

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree and give it to page Urooj.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll make this petition short. I'll just speak to the resolution of it. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding Hydro One networks.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Premier and the Minister of Energy reduce the waste and duplication in Ontario's electricity sector and take other necessary steps to lower the cost of electricity so that Ontario's electricity prices are competitive with other jurisdictions."

There are over 10,000 people that have signed this petition on my website, and I support it fully.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I am pleased to affix my name to the petition and will send it to the Clerk through page Urooj.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario are now paying over a dollar a litre for polluting carbon fuel and they could be paying half that for non-polluting clean fuel, and the province has no contingency in place in case carbon fuel becomes less available or more costly, or if people demand a clean non-carbon contingency fuel to be ready in case gasoline or diesel are found to be causing health or climate problems to Ontarians. Batteries will power some small vehicles, but most normal cars and big trucks and airplanes require GreenNH₃.

"In Ontario some nights there is an excess electric problem which Ontarians pay millions for electricity to be used by others. GreenNH₃ has offered to deal with that problem for free by registered mail, but have not had any reply. That excess electric could be made into GreenNH₃ to power GO trains or GO buses cleanly, but instead you and I pay millions to others to dispose of it. Also GreenNH₃ will create thousands of new high-tech jobs. It could start the next innovation hub as computers did in California. We can get these jobs for free and not pay a million each for them as some do for auto jobs.

"The Insurance Bureau of Canada says \$3 billion will be paid out in claims for 2013 compared to \$1 billion normally because of climate change, and the leaders let on they are for clean alternatives, yet when a resident of Ontario sends numerous registered mail with a proven lower-cost clean technology for five years, they don't even get a reply?

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To formally recognize GreenNH₃ as a fuel and do all things possible as a province legislatively and monetarily to get the GreenNH₃ fuel technology scaled up to a point where it could be commercialized quickly in case carbon fuels become scarce, or out of the viable price of ordinary citizens, or health- or climate-change-related red flags make some Ontarians want to use a clean safe lower-cost non-carbon alternative."

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Prue: I have a petition. Again, I'm only going to read the "Be it resolved" that is in French. It is rather lengthy and it was read in total yesterday by my colleague from Nickel Belt.

« Que le ministre de l'Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7° à la 12° année d'études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n'auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d'une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Mr. Hoskins moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 176, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la reduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm going to be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from York Centre.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege to introduce the Better Business Climate Act. Today I'm pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this proposed legislation that, if passed, would create a better business climate by reducing burdens and driving economic growth by supporting the development of clusters. These two initiatives are a part of our government's economic plan that's focused on sustained job creation and building stronger partnerships right across the economy.

The proposed Better Business Climate Act is key to building on those partnerships, because it's about providing faster, smarter and more streamlined government services to businesses, and it's about reducing the burden of regulatory and administrative activities to save our businesses time and make running a business in Ontario easier. Of course, we need to take a balanced approach to preserving the regulations needed to protect the health and safety of our people, while shedding those that impose unnecessary burdens for businesses.

I want to be perfectly clear on this point: The focus is on examining and improving how the government works and interacts with stakeholders and provides services, not on reducing or arbitrarily removing necessary regulatory requirements or regulations.

For example, as part of the Fewer Burdens, Greater Growth report released in January, WSIB has reduced the length of the no-lost-time injury claim form by 60% and now allows these claims to be made online or over the phone. It may seem like a simple measure, but these types of measures save significant time, which translates, of course, into money for our businesses across the province.

Administrative process changes like these can save Ontario businesses literally millions of dollars while still protecting the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, these burdens, whether they're time or money or resources, are a burden to business, and they negatively impact our productivity, our innovation and economic growth. We're committed to reducing unnecessary burdens on an ongoing basis by making Ontario one of the few places in the world that measures and indeed reports on the time and financial savings to businesses. As part of this initiative, every single ministry will have to identify and target regulatory burdens to reduce each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, this will ensure that we're taking a modern, sophisticated and multi-ministerial approach, so that all of government is working together to streamline and reduce the time and money that businesses spend, so they can focus on growing and competing in our global economy. Not only does that help our business, but it also makes Ontario a much more attractive place to invest.

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We're pleased to be recognized as a Canadian leader in the reduction of unnecessary regulatory requirements by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. When we announced our intent to introduce this proposed legislation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business applauded the changes. They said that Ontario will be joining the "best in class in regulatory reform."

Our proposed legislation on burden reduction also has strong support from stakeholders including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Financial Services Alliance and the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

Since 2008, our Open for Business initiative to modernize government has eliminated some 80,000 burdens already, which represents 17% of all regulatory requirements. We're making further improvements that will save our businesses \$100 million over the next three years. We believe this is a realistic target that will help businesses across the province as they spend less time filling out paperwork, searching for information, hiring consultants and awaiting government approvals.

You may ask, "How do we know that our \$100-million target for businesses is achievable?" We know because we started in 2013 to attribute dollar and time costs to our work on burden reduction projects and assessing the savings in time and money that would accrue to businesses as a result of our burden reductions.

We know the world of business is changing constantly, and government needs to keep pace with this change by continually making its processes faster, smarter and easier for businesses and stakeholders. This is why this proposed legislation, quite frankly, is so important. By committing government to annual reporting, this legislation will, if passed, ensure that this and future governments will stay focused on burden reduction and modernizing processes.

British Columbia and Saskatchewan have both passed similar pieces of legislation in recent years. By enshrining annual reporting on burden reduction in legislation, Ontario will not only catch up to other leading jurisdictions on this issue, but we will become a global

leader.

Mr. Speaker, there's a second component to the proposed Better Business Climate Act. To build stronger partnerships between government and business, our government is committed to supporting the growth of strong regional economic clusters. Now, a cluster is a specific geographic concentration of businesses both large and small, along with the institutions and the people that support them: our colleges and universities, our not-forprofits, local governments and labour. Clusters exist right across the province, from the mining and forestry clusters in northern Ontario to the obvious financial services cluster here in Toronto to the high-tech clusters in Ottawa, Toronto, and Kitchener-Waterloo. In fact, our hightech cluster here in the province is the second-largest high-tech sector in all of North America, just after California.

We know the importance of clusters to building our economy. We know that governments cannot single-handedly create them. What we can do, however, is help to catalyze and grow them. Cluster development plans are designed to act as this catalyst. They will help to facilitate stronger cluster planning and collaboration with business, industry and partner ministries to raise the province's capacity for innovation and economic prosperity. Through the planning process, Ontario will facilitate new partnerships by working with industry leaders to identify key policies that will support a long-term vision and plan for cluster growth.

The Better Business Climate Act will, if passed, bring this cluster model to regions right across the province and across, as I mentioned, a large variety of sectors. This legislation would provide our government with a new tool to build partnerships with business and industry, colleges and universities, not-for-profits, labour and all levels of government. It will help to identify and build up emerging clusters and to strengthen existing ones.

Now, building strategic cluster plans will include outlining clear, established goals and coordinating actions to support the development of a specific cluster. Mandatory reviews of the plans would be required every five years to evaluate progress and ensure that these plans align with changing industry and emerging economic trends.

So, whether it's reducing burdens to help improve our business climate and save businesses time and money, or if it's strengthening our regional economic clusters across the province, our government's economic plan will continue to get results and will continue to create jobs for today and jobs for tomorrow, because we know that a strong economy is not only possible when we invest in our greatest strengths—our people—but, as we are seeing today, investing in our partnerships.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I want to pick up where Minister Hoskins left off about partnerships, and how the Better Business Climate Act will, if passed, enhance partnerships between our government and Ontario business.

Ontario has made great strides in adapting to the recent changes in the global economic system. Our plan is focused on sustained job creation and building stronger partnerships across the economy. The proposed legislation complements the government's actions to strengthen the economy and increase Ontario's overall competitiveness, including:

—investing \$35 billion in infrastructure;

—introducing Ontario's Going Global trade strategy;

—announcing the \$295-million youth jobs strategy;

—reducing the marginal effective tax rate on new business investment in Ontario by half since 2009; and

—ensuring that Ontarians have the skills and education they need to succeed in a globalized market.

We have done well in steering Ontario through some challenging times, and we plan to continue with our successes.

Many economic experts say that Ontario can become an even more prosperous and competitive jurisdiction in the 21st century by leveraging government-business partnerships to help strengthen industry clusters. In markets worldwide, cluster development has accelerated economic development by creating supportive environments for business, academia and innovation.

Industry plays a key role in regional economic development. They can help support the creation of sustainable, well-paid jobs, stimulate innovation, attract investment, strengthen linkages between research institutions and firms, and anchor a talented workforce.

Mr. Speaker, that's one half of the equation of the proposed Better Business Climate Act. The other is burden reduction. I want to emphasize that Ontario's new approach to burden reduction was not developed in isolation. It has emerged from speaking to business groups and stakeholders for several years.

In 2008, the government created Ontario Open for Business, a cross-government initiative to create faster and smarter government-to-business services. Through this initiative, we removed over 80,000 unnecessary regulatory burdens.

Ontario's regulatory policy includes a range of tools and processes to make sure, when new regulations are needed to protect Ontarians' health and safety or our environment, that they are effective, transparent and evidence-based.

The new tools, policies and processes of the Open for Business initiative are changing the regulatory landscape across our government, helping to ensure ministries continue to work creatively and transparently to reduce unnecessary burden and to find ways to make business-to-government interactions as seamless and cost-effective as possible.

I am proud of the work that we are doing in collaboration with business leaders and other stakeholders to help position Ontario as a global leader in reducing barriers to business, and proud of the great strides we have made in developing clusters in important sectors like financial services, and information and communications technologies.

The Better Business Climate Act, if passed, will help us build better partnerships between our government and business, and a better quality of life for all Ontarians. 1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand and address what we've just heard, because I have a problem with one comment that was shared: that right here, right now, Ontario is an attractive place to invest. That's not what we're hearing on this side of the House.

I'm telling you: As we face the export of our youth and the export of our businesses to the United States, we have to take a look at ourselves and really understand what's causing our young people, our corporations and our businesses to consider moving out of this area. The fact of the matter is that we need a climate that is encouraging investment and confidence in Ontario.

The fact is that the underlying problem that is seen in Ontario is the cost of electricity. I have corporations in my riding that have been there for over 100 years, and because of the mismanagement of the energy file, they're facing really difficult times. Other folks—I can start rhyming them off. Champion Motor Graders was bought out by Volvo in Goderich; they relocated to Pennsylvania. E.D. Smith, out of Seaforth, relocated to the States as well. And the list goes on and on.

As I said, the underlying issue in all of this is that we have a province that is burdened with regulations that are handcuffing small business and causing them to experience a total of \$11 billion—research is showing that regulatory burden in Ontario is costing our businesses \$11 billion, and then you add the cost of electricity on top of that.

When I was in Windsor a couple of weeks ago, I learned that convenience stores were experiencing hydro bills which were steeper than their rent. We have to address this in a more serious context.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to stand in this House. Today, I respond to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment and his introduction of the Better Business Climate Act. Something that could create a better business climate is actually following through, or lessening the uncertainty coming from northern Ontario: the not-so-better business climate coming from cancelling the ONTC, if you're a company in northern Ontario, and all of a sudden it's announced that your freight line might not be there anymore.

Something that could create a better business climate in Ontario: Instead of announcing for years what you're going to do and about how the Ring of Fire is going to be the economic engine of the province, maybe it would be good to take steps so that we could actually approach the Ring of Fire, and so that we could consult with the First Nations. Instead of talking about it for years, holding press conferences where the refinery is going to be, before you've ever even started to consult the First Nations—that is not creating a good business climate in Ontario.

This is a good thing to talk about, a good bill to talk about. Hopefully we can get some good things out of it, but let's take a look at the big picture. The other members talked about hydro prices. Talk about a way to create a better business climate: to create hydro costs that are so high that you've got businesses like Xstrata in Timmins leaving the province. One of the most environmentally friendly smelters in North America closes and is torn down because they can't afford our hydro prices.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: That ore is still being smelted in another province. It's much more environmentally unfriendly, yet it moved because of our not-better business climate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by actually refuting the arguments that were put forward by the member from—Huron–Bruce?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, Timisk-aming-Cochrane.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No, Huron–Bruce and Timisk-aming–Cochrane. Thank you.

I have here a statistic that says that Toronto ranks number 3 in North America and 11th globally in competitiveness ratings for global financial centres. So we are competitive, and it's no accident that we are competitive. We are competitive because of a series of initiatives that have been taken over the last 10 years by this government. This Better Business Climate Act is just the latest in a series of initiatives that this government has introduced, whether it's competitive tax rates, whether it's a regulation that says that for every new regulation that's added, you have to remove two. These are all little things this government has been doing for a long time to cut red tape.

I remember in the Mike Harris years, when governments could still blatantly advertise, there was this big hoarding all the time where you could see this detective-like guy saying, "I'm going to cut red tape," but no red tape was cut. Along comes the Liberal government, and

we really began to cut red tape. This Better Business Climate Act—

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I know that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing remembers those ads. I know that he remembers them. They were all over the GTA. I don't know if they were up in Pembroke.

But my point is that this is a very good act. What it's going to do is save businesses and stakeholders over \$100 million by 2016-17. Think about that: \$100 million. That's a lot of money we can use and put to good use to ensure that those in need—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's wonderful listening to the noble intentions of the minister, and I have to pat him on the back for the noble intentions. I will maybe start off by showing the minister an Ontario Provincial Offences pocket edition handbook, if the minister hasn't seen this yet. This book is 3,600 pages in length. The interesting thing about this book, about regulations—

Interjection: What pocket does it fit in?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Liberals do have deep pockets after they have taken everybody else's money, but I don't think it would even fit in that.

In 2003, this book was less than 2,000 pages in length; it's now over 3,500 pages in length. Each one of those new pages is full of new regulations—new regulations. I would say this to the minister: If, indeed, he is well intended about this bill, where you first have to go is defining what a regulation is, because even in this House we don't have a definition of what a regulation or a regulatory step is. In order to be able to cut something, you have to first be able to measure and quantify what it is, and you guys haven't done that yet. There is no definition of a regulatory step.

I think that's really where you have to go at this. Until you do that, we can hear all this nonsense, as the previous member said, about you cutting regulations, but you haven't. The book gets bigger and bigger and we all need to have bigger and deeper pockets, just so that you guys can get your hands in there and buy a few more gas plants where we don't need them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment has two minutes.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues for their comments and insights. I'd encourage the last speaker to bring that book across and explain to me precisely which regulations he would want to cut from that book.

I want to conclude by going back to what I said when I introduced the Better Business Climate Act. This proposed legislation is all about partnerships. It's about how we can work together with business and, frankly, many other partners to continue to grow the economy. It is an economy that is growing, despite what the PC Party has said

We have added 440,000 net new full-time jobs since the bottom of the recession. Despite what they'd like to claim about the investment climate in this province, the fact is that we are and remain the number one destination for foreign direct investment in all of North America.

We believe in our partnership with business, and we'll continue to work with them to grow the economy, create more jobs and strengthen our business climate. Our government's economic plan to create jobs and grow the economy is focused precisely on our greatest strengths: our people and our strategic partnerships.

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The Better Business Climate Act, if passed, will help to provide faster, smarter and certainly more streamlined government services to our businesses. It will, if passed, help us find that balance, something that perhaps the PC Party doesn't fully understand, because they want to cut regulations by one third. But we need to keep that balance between regulations that are essential to protect health, safety and the environment and those that are unnecessary burdens for businesses. That's precisely where we, as a government, are landing.

This legislation will, if passed, hold this and all future governments accountable for ensuring that we improve Ontario's business climate and that reducing unnecessary

burden remains a government priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much. I'm still thinking about this pocketbook and whose pocket it could actually fit in.

Thank you to those members who have taken part in debate on this legislation this afternoon. As the economic development, trade and employment critic for Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I am pleased to rise today to offer yet another response to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. It is a special occasion. I say that not because this will be my first leadoff as a critic; I say that because it is rare that we in this House are offered the chance to debate legislation brought forward by this ministry.

By my count, this is only the third piece of legislation brought forward by a Minister of Economic Development since the ministry was created in 1990. It is technically the first piece of legislation introduced by a Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, because the full "Trade and Employment" title is new. I believe that it is also the first formal piece of legislation introduced by the member for St. Paul's since he took office four and a half years ago. So, through no fault of his own, Bill 176 arrives with a sense of historic occasion.

I have had the great good fortune of serving as critic opposite the minister twice now, first as critic for children and youth, a role I dearly loved, and now with my current portfolio. The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is, in some ways, a critic's nightmare. He cuts a dashing and sympathetic figure. He is, of course, a bright, Oxford-educated Rhodes Scholar,

a caring humanitarian who headed up War Child Canada alongside his beautiful and talented wife; a doctor decorated with honours and accolades, from the Order of Canada to the United Nations Lester B. Pearson Peace Medal to the Governor General's Meritorious Service Cross, and on and on.

But we must acknowledge that there have been some disappointments too. This is, I regret to say, the same member who, with a straight face, rationalized the former Premier's disgraceful prorogation by comparing the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate to a war zone. In one throwaway phrase, he managed to cheapen the suffering of families in legitimate war zones and put a cynical, partisan spin on the opposition's push for accountability. This place is not a war zone; it is closer to Twilight Zone.

I would remind all those listening at home that then, as now, we seek answers on behalf of the people of Ontario, whose interests we were elected to serve. If the debate in this Legislature becomes heated, it glows with the understandable outrage of our constituents. Our party's campaign for answers on scandals such as Ornge and the power plant cancellations has led to not one, but two OPP investigations of this government, and the ongoing quest for answers from this cabinet has made some of the members opposite extremely uncomfortable. It has resulted in legislation like Bill 176, which is disappointing and perhaps a little ironic.

During his party's leadership campaign, the member for St. Paul's described himself as "untethered from the machinery of politics," which I suppose we all were at that point, since the Legislature was closed. Win or lose, he expressed optimism that Ontario Liberals would fundamentally change their stripes. He said: "If it's" business "as usual, we will not succeed. We can't just rearrange the storefront." And yet here we are with Bill 176—same old storefront, same generic brand in the window.

In response to the minister's statement on the introduction of this bill last week, I remarked that this bill was "little more than window dressing." I regret that, in the minute and a half that I had at the time, I was unable to address this proposed legislation with the depth and detail that it deserves. I am grateful for the opportunity to rise again today to enrich the debate around this legislation and the economic issues that it claims to engage.

It's important that all members of this House and all Ontarians understand the context of this legislation, why we are debating it here today, why I have described it in unflattering terms and why I will not be supporting this proposed legislation. In keeping with its limited but inflatable language, Bill 176 is the world's littlest omnibus—containing the smallest number of schedules you can have and still claim to be an omnibus bill—that proposes two entirely separate acts. It is also a piece of legislation that I will, quite frankly, be challenged to discuss as anything but an insult to the working people of Ontario. We have seen no shortage of so-called window dressing legislation from this government, bills that pro-

pose to take strong action, for example, only to take the easy way out.

The tired responses of the party opposite are not a solution. They are part of the problem. They are part of the problem, and Bill 176 is more of the same. It is all talk, and not much of that. It is merely empty legislation that announces an intention but does nothing. It has been crafted to serve as a proof point for future debate, designed to insulate the government on matters where it is most vulnerable, such as economic mismanagement and a dismal track record on accountability, while constructing a façade of good government. It is all as thin and insubstantial as a wafer.

Some would argue that this is just one of many like it, a component of a larger system of empty, ineffective or deceptive bills that are as thin as veneer and which some would say are not even really meant to pass into law. They are most valuable as bumper stickers, catchphrases that can be invoked as proof points during fundraising campaigns and election debates.

Bill 176 is the government striking an action pose. The so-called Better Business Climate Act amounts to a pile of words delivered without purpose, conviction or urgency. Coming from a minister whose scholarly background is a huge part of his personal brand and arriving in the midst of the world's worst economic challenges and social disruptions in generations, I find it impossible not to be deeply disappointed and frankly even saddened by this legislation before us today.

This legislation is entirely symbolic, without substance, and has no reason to exist other than as a platform of Liberal messaging. I have the greatest respect for the minister, and I know that he is capable of more than this. In his heart, I believe he also knows this to be true. There is no question that the people of Ontario deserve better than this from a government bill. They deserve creativity, courage and leadership from those entrusted with the reins of our economy. I believe that he knows this to be true as well.

Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to describe the economic context in which Bill 176 is received and the challenges against which its recommended tools must ultimately be judged. Since the minister took up this portfolio 13 months ago, dozens of companies have closed or announced plans to move jobs out of Ontario. While we often hear speakers from the party opposite assert that the province's economy has recovered all of those jobs lost since before the recession, the government members are silent on the finer points. The numbers that the government waves around do not take into account their relative value, because Ontario's working-age population has grown over the last several years. We are still playing catch-up in terms of proportional employment.

As well, the economy has undergone a sea change under the government. High-paying, long-term, permanent positions are being replaced with lower-paying, less secure jobs. Terms like "part-time," "contract," "seasonal" or "temporary" are far more common than they once were. Pretending the two categories are somehow equal

is convenient spin, not a realistic appraisal of the state of the economy or the challenges ahead. Throwing around millions in corporate welfare might be—a media cycle. But it cannot undo the failed policies and economic mismanagement that have hobbled this province as an economic engine.

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Wrong-headed, ineffective policies aren't helping to foster new growth either. A recent survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that only one in six Ontario businesses said that they thought the provincial government has a vision that supports small business. Just three in 100 said that Premier Wynne understands the reality of running a small business.

The good news: Ontario business leaders are passionate and they're driven. They know their market and they believe in their product. Our entrepreneurs—there's still opportunity everywhere. Our workers are skilled, creative and hard-working, and these strengths are enormous

advantages.

But business cannot realize its full potential until the government does its part. The provincial government has been slow to wake up to this fact, as Bill 176 proves. Policy after policy has been rolled out without giving thought to the impact on business. We've seen a decade of hesitation, mismanagement and inaction from the Ontario Liberal government when it comes to jobs, the economy and reining in the government's spending. This government has stayed in its bubble, kept its head in the sand, and failed to tap into the expertise of the private sector. It has lost track of the priorities of Ontarians about what businesses want and what they need.

Ontario's businesses live in the real world. They know that capital is mobile and that investors can go where they feel they stand the greatest odds of being successful. It's clear that this provincial government is not listening carefully to the needs of businesses, particularly small

businesses, the seeds of future prosperity.

The Liberal government doesn't even look after its own business very well. They have no plan to balance the budget, no plan to reduce taxes on small businesses or address the burden of red tape. No plan to create jobs, Speaker. Kick-starting economic growth and ending Ontario's debt crisis are interdependent. By the same token, one might argue that the opposite is also true. Runaway debt and uncontrollable spending hamstrings the government's ability to maintain the status quo, let alone adapt to unforeseen events.

Since 2003, the Liberals have doubled the provincial debt and run up a deficit bigger than all other provinces combined. Government spending in Ontario is \$22 billion higher than it was five budgets ago, an increase of 20% during an era of non-growth. The stimulus funding that the Liberal government told us was temporary has now become permanent. The blue-sky spending has severely limited our ability to maintain the quality of life the people of this province expect and demand.

Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average for almost seven straight years. Over half a

million of our neighbours here in Ontario are out of work. Yet the government still won't produce a credible jobs plan. Over the last decade, Ontario has seen over 330,000 manufacturing jobs vanish. That's the equivalent of a city the size of London, Ontario, waking up to a bleak, cold landscape and a long wait until sunrise. Since the recession, Ontario has had the highest long-term unemployment rate in the country, and the average length of unemployment for jobless in this province is 22 weeks. It has been that way for the last four years.

When it comes to our hope for the future, our children's prospects are darkest. Their unemployment rate is more than 16%, nearly three times the national average. Like it or not, that sends a clear message. This government's policies are just killing manufacturing jobs. They're driving talented young people away, and Bill 176 offers them little reason to look back.

Nearly a third of Ontario's part-time workers want full-time work but can't find it. That figure is 5% higher than when the party opposite formed government. Again, as with general unemployment rates, Ontario's rates of involuntary part-time work is also higher than the national average.

We've seen this government's ideology on power, an ill-conceived green energy plan that killed four jobs in the broader economy for each one it created in markets like wind and solar. Alongside that, homeowners and businesses have watched with horror as hydro rates have tripled in the past decade and continue to skyrocket. Not long ago, the energy minister revealed that rates would undergo a hefty increase over the next five years.

This government's lax business fundamentals represent a barrier to economic growth in Ontario, but Bill 176 pretends that the gorilla is not in the room.

Ontario's trade deficit has been called the single largest drag on our province's economic growth, and it shows no sign of going anywhere under this government. According to the Liberals' own trade fact sheet, Ontario exports from 2012 were substantially below where they stood in 2003. Import levels have increased by 15% in that time. The result is that Ontario's annual trade deficit has more than doubled since the Liberals came into office. The picture only worsens once you take inflation into account, and it has been estimated that only 6% of Ontario small businesses export at all.

We're not punching above our weight, but Bill 176 is silent on that point. Ontario is an export economy, and this government appears to be more interested in exotic junkets than the mundane work of lowering trade barriers.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has urged this government on numerous occasions to pursue trade relations with other provinces that will reduce or remove artificial barriers to growth, yet Ontario has arrived at one interprovincial trade deal, six years ago, with Quebec. Our province's outsized reliance on exports to the United States, where more than three quarters of our exports wind up, has lulled us into a false sense of security.

There is a cautionary tale about eggs and baskets that would apply here.

During boom times, Ontario simply had to keep up with orders, but when the States are hit with a bear market or are enduring a period of economic stagnation, things become vastly more problematic. It is important for our government to constantly be initiating, pursuing and finalizing free trade agreements with other jurisdictions at home as well as abroad. It is important to remember in everything we do that Ontario is competing in a global market, but Bill 176 struggles to tie its shoelaces.

Ontario businesses are about to experience unprecedented opportunity overseas as free trade agreements with the EU and South Korea come on stream, yet apparently we don't even bother to undertake any committed activity that would boost Ontario's exports within Canada or lead to income substitution. Again, Bill 176 neglects to engage this key economic issue.

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the Agreement on Internal Trade. In December 2013, the Committee on Internal Trade, of which the minister is a member, met to discuss ways to reduce interior barriers to trade—a teleconference call. Ontario is literally phoning it in when it comes to the matter of interprovincial trade, but we're flying halfway around the world for a photo op in a Dubai Tim Hortons.

And Saskatchewan is still deciding what to do with a legal opinion indicating that Ontario's local knowledge requirement may be in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade, something we have seen again with regard to the College of Trades: red tape forcing Red Seal trades from other provinces to recertify in order to work in Ontario. Interprovincial trade barriers shaved billions off our productivity and hurt Ontario business's ability to compete at home and abroad. But again, Bill 176 is mute.

The urgency of overcoming interprovincial trade barriers was squarely tackled by Perrin Beatty, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, at the beginning of this year. In a commentary in the Globe and Mail, he wrote, "Canada just concluded the most comprehensive trade agreement in our history. It's ironic that the provinces were able to find common ground with our agreement with Europe and yet they have a difficult time sitting in the same room to discuss trade amongst themselves. At the same time that we're undertaking the most ambitious international trade agenda in Canadian history, we remain divided internally. It's sobering to think of a future where it's easier for Ontario to trade with Europe or India than for Alberta to trade with Ouebec."

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Mr. Beatty was echoed by an editorial in yesterday's Windsor Star that remarked:

"[I]f Hoskins is really concerned about cutting unnecessary costs and time of businesses, he might also want to start championing the benefits of breaking down the barriers that prevent the free trade of goods and services across provincial borders. "For example, it's estimated interprovincial trade is worth about \$300 billion a year, yet a series of internal trade barriers amount to a 7% tax—about \$20 billion. Businesses could better use that money to take advantage of new marketing opportunities and cut costs.

"In fact, a group of seven business groups—including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, and Council of Chief Executives—has said the problem is so serious that the recently negotiated EU trade deal will provide better access to European countries into the Canadian market than the provinces are willing to give each other."

This is no digression. This is the lens through which we must evaluate the promise and reality of Bill 176. In light of the diversity and severity of issues impacting Ontario's economy today, and in the context of the Premier's talk of an aspirational budget, it is not hard to imagine that this bill is much of anything at all.

Ontario faces serious problems. When will this government take the economy seriously enough to unveil a real jobs plan? Bill 176 is not animated by a grand idea of the province, and it suggests no sweeping visions for how to proceed—no connection to reality.

The components of the bill, the two acts, sit awkwardly beside each other. Despite the fact that this bill is apparently supposed to take the torch from 2010's bill, Bill 68—what the government refers to as the Open for Business Act—it could hardly be less like that bill.

Incidentally, Bill 68 arrived in May 2010. That followed extended efforts by the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to get the Liberal government to take real steps to reduce red tape in order to help create jobs and unlock economic growth.

In October 2009 we released a small business jobs plan which called on then-Premier McGuinty to resurrect the Red Tape Commission, which he dismantled after forming government in 2003. In March 2010, we unveiled a 10 for 2010 plan, which, again, called on the government to resurrect the Red Tape Commission.

Although our party's dedicated efforts have produced some progress on regulatory reform, the Liberal government remains unwilling to take decisive action on this important issue. Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on the other hand, announced the creation of a Red Tape Reduction Commission in January 2013. The CFIB was, as you might expect, enthusiastically supportive, describing it as "music to the ears of any Canadian that has ever dealt with excessive and often senseless government rules, regulations and paperwork."

Unfortunately, since that time, the Ontario government's most visible reduction in useless paperwork can be found in legislation such as this. Bill 68 is 166 pages long. Bill 176 is just eight pages long, and really only six of those contain the meat of the proposed legislation. That's longer than the last piece of legislation to come from the ministry: 2012's Bill 11, at six pages. But where both Bill 68 and Bill 11 attempted to do something, the language in Bill 176 is so painstakingly vague that it comes across as more of a teaser than a long-awaited

sequel. If passed, Bill 176 would enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnership for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014.

So let's look under the hood here. The explanatory note tells us that "Schedule 1 enacts the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014, which requires the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment to publish an annual report with respect to actions taken by the government of Ontario to reduce burdens." These briefs are typically more abstract than the legislation itself, so let's look at schedule 1.

I doubt that anyone would take exception to the preamble of the Burden Reductions Reporting Act. It reads:

"Ontario recognizes that the ongoing maintenance of a modern, efficient, accountable and transparent regulatory and administrative environment is necessary to foster economic growth, prosperity and a competitive business climate.

"Statutory, regulatory, procedural, administrative and other requirements are necessary to protect the public interest, including health, safety and the environment. However, some requirements may also create burdens, such as burdens inadvertently created over time, that unnecessarily inhibit productivity, job creation and innovation."

Not all regulation is created equal, in other words. No argument here—red tape is relative. Some regulations are in place for very good reasons, and should remain so. We often debate these very matters here in this House, which is as it should be in a healthy democracy.

Schedule 1 of Bill 176 is designed to create the appearance that the Liberal government is taking action to reduce the regulatory burden for businesses in Ontario. It is important to emphasize, however, that it does not take any concrete steps toward that goal. All the legislation actually does is require the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment to release a report about what the government is doing to reduce the regulatory burden. It doesn't set out any specific targets or metrics for measuring progress, or even suggest that objective evidence should be driving these evaluations.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, on the other hand, has a red tape reduction plan that has clear goals, one that we have talked about repeatedly, both inside and outside of this House. We would reduce regulation by one third over the course of three years. We also have clearly defined implementation structures: The Deputy Premier would be responsible for regulation reduction, with the pay of cabinet ministers tied to performance on this count.

The Liberals, meanwhile, are content to settle for another annual report on a highly stage-managed public relations opportunity. This is an empty legislative initiative that actually empowers the minister to create more regulations in a bill to reduce the regulatory burden for businesses. This regulatory power even allows the minister to regulate himself or herself out of a publication deadline. Subsection 2(2)(b) tells us that this annual report would be made available on or before June 30,

unless the minister chooses another date and sets it via regulations.

This regulatory clause is notable, not just because of the irony that it is actively creating red tape even as the schedule allegedly seeks to cut red tape; it is also notable because the habit of leaving all the heavy lifting to regulations is an anti-democratic reflex that is at odds with the government's frequent talk of transparency and accountability. We have seen this time and time again from this government's bills, where all of the really crucial details are postponed for a later date in a space free from public scrutiny or debate. Or you might be more comfortable with the possibility that government legislators simply got tired, stopped caring and ran out of ideas. In any event, the upshot is the same: The details will be sorted out in cabinet and we'll learn about it in the back pages of the Ontario Gazette.

1630

In last week's opening statement related to Bill 176, the minister remarked, "Since 2008, our Open for Business initiative to modernize government has eliminated 80,000 burdens, which represent 17% of all regulatory requirements..." This was a claim that I red-flagged in my response, and I think that the point I made last week is worth repeating here again today, Speaker. I observed that the very same claim about red tape reduction had been made by the previous Minister of Economic Development in January 2012, although he was more exact, calling it a 17.2% reduction.

The fact remains, however, that these essentially identical claims, delivered two years apart, illustrate the need for decisive action and the perils of government complacency. What we are seeing is a two-year period in which there has been little to no progress on red tape, an issue that the business community regularly tells us is a high priority and which is apparently urgent enough that it has led to the creation of schedule 1 of Bill 176, but, aside from that, not urgent enough to do much about.

Again, in January 2012, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Innovation trumpeted the fact that the government has eliminated 80,000 pieces of regulation since 2008. This very claim was repeated by the sitting Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. In 2011, the minister before that, who was recently appointed chair of Hydro One, boasted that the government had wiped out 70,000 pieces of regulation since 2008. These are all perfectly round numbers, which is how you know that they're not being made up on the fly, but assuming that these are legitimate accomplishments, what do these numbers tell us?

First, something that will be perfectly obvious to all of us: that the government's ambitions essentially left the building around the 2011 election. Approximately 88% of the progress the government claims to have made on regulatory burden reduction took place between 2008 and 2011. The remainder took place in the following six months. How do we explain that unusual three-year burst of activity followed by basically nothing? Why did the momentum just die out like that? First, remember that

most of the regulatory burden reduction appears to be linked to the onset of taxation reform, specifically the harmonized sales tax. As of Canada Day 2010, two tax structures became one. Given the depth and complexity of the tax code, it seems reasonable to assume that most of the 80,000 regulations eliminated since 2008 took place before July 1, 2010. The remainder took place in the 18 months that followed.

Since January 2012, there seems to have been little to no headway to speak of. I have to ask: Why on earth is legislation required here? Does the government not track its investments of time and energy now? Does it not evaluate performance? Does it not benchmark its achievements for its own good, if not for the people of Ontario? Does it not already learn from those evaluations and adjust its policy accordingly? As far as the matter of submitting an annual report, the members of this Legislature should be familiar with the government's resultsbased planning book and fiscal year financials. Should we be encouraged that it takes legislation to compel the minister to do his or her job? Does this legislation create any formal inspiration for the minister to do anything more than he or she should be doing, or is this just one more way of branding the government?

Obviously, this is a government that has not been especially committed to reducing the administrative burden of red tape on business. That burden, as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reminds us, saps billions from our businesses and households every single year. It compromises productivity. It compounds stress and worry, and it adds needless expense, sucking money out of the broader economy.

Another organization that has sounded off on the high cost of red tape is the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, RCCAO. They issued their wake-up call in an independent study in 2010 that was followed up again just recently. It's called Are Ontario's Municipal Class Environmental Assessments Worth the Added Time and Cost? The RCCAO found that in the past four years the average completion time for a municipal class environmental assessment has grown by well over a third, thanks to the overregulation, increasing from 19 months to 26 months. The added cost to infrastructure projects is estimated to be an additional 10% on construction costs due to associated delays.

All of us are aware of the ways in which the infrastructure deficit negatively impacts quality of life in our ridings and neighbourhoods. This is no small concern. Given the scale of money invested in infrastructure annually, the money potentially being wasted as a result of government inaction is truly staggering.

As I noted earlier, the public remarks of the last three Ministers of Economic Development captured the progress of red tape reduction. You can see this reflected in the annual red tape report cards tallied up by the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Ontario's ranking has been essentially flat for the last three years. Conveniently lost in all of this is the fact that the

former Premier had promised a 25% reduction in red tape by 2011. Three years later, we're still at 17%.

Interjection: Get out of here.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I can't believe it.

Admittedly, the former Premier promised a lot of things that never came to pass.

Ontario's economy is facing serious challenges. Ontario's people deserve a government that is serious about this economy.

In his opening comment the minister remarked that, "Under the improved strategy, we will not only continue to identify unnecessary burdens, but we'll reduce and eliminate them, saving businesses even more time and money." This is a particularly instructive statement. The minister promises that he will not only identify needless regulations but he is prepared to reduce or, if push comes to shove, eliminate them. Ontario businesses owners will undoubtedly sleep easier.

One might reasonably ask: If the government is aware that a regulation is unnecessary, if they have evaluated it and found it to be redundant, outdated or otherwise useless, why would they not eliminate it as a matter of standard procedure? Do you not question yourself of that? Why, by the same token, would you seek to merely reduce a regulatory burden that you have explicitly identified as unnecessary? It is a very strange thing to expect to be congratulated on, or to hold up as an aspirational goal. If you believe that a piece of regulation has no productive value other than to fatten the bureaucracy, why not just get rid of it altogether?

Schedule 2 of Bill 176, the so-called Partnership for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014, begins with another vanilla-flavoured preamble:

"Ontario is committed to maintaining its competitive edge in the increasingly competitive global economy.

"Clusters, which are geographically concentrated groups of interconnected businesses and related entities, can perform an important function in regional economic development by increasing productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

"Ontario can act as a catalyst to spur the development of clusters. By working with businesses and other entities to develop plans with respect to the development of clusters, Ontario can promote the growth of jobs and the economy."

1640

What exactly does schedule 2 go on to do? It empowers the minister to consult, create a plan, review the plan every five years, produce a report and make regulations. But how does this create jobs or stimulate economic growth? The short answer is that it doesn't. This is about creating more panels, more reports and more work for bureaucrats. It's not about private sector jobs at all.

Economic clusters are organic by nature. They can't be created by government from the top down. This is especially true of high-tech sectors such as information and communications technology, or ICT. That sector is highly prized by governments the world over because it tends to be a job creation dynamo. Some studies suggest

that start-up businesses in the ICT sector are responsible for new jobs and new businesses—almost 50% more likely to grow than the private sector as a whole.

The trouble with trying to bottle this sector's lightning is telegraphed in its name: information and communications technology. Although they tend to locate in the same markets, these companies may not be very tight on the map. In fact, those firms don't have to be located anywhere in particular. The technology they create is part of the reason they can be so widespread. By some estimates, almost two thirds of the workforce of Silicon Valley firms are located outside of California.

What is abundantly clear in the high-tech sector is true of virtually all economic clusters. They are organic cultures that benefit from minimal meddling from government. Creating a province that has a healthy and growth-positive economic environment and keeping the regulatory burden manageable is enough of a recipe for success.

Government can only set the table for cluster development by supporting investment in research and development, reducing taxes and creating laws to ensure that failed entrepreneurs are not penalized, then simply get out of the way. As such, schedule 2 of Bill 176 is another excuse to spend public dollars where there's little or no evidence that doing so will create jobs.

It is also absurd to evaluate an economic plan every five years. A real plan is dynamic and is consistently being reassessed and adapted as conditions and circumstances change. We live in a highly networked global economy, and response time is critical. That's the world that start-up businesses and entrepreneurs live in, and treally hopes to make a positive difference to Ontario's various specialized economic clusters. Not only that, but the evaluation of the plan's relative success is not data-driven at all; it's purely anecdotal.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Liberals don't like numbers. Mrs. Jane McKenna: That's right.

Bill 176 requires that the plans be evaluated by "consulting with persons or entities who have an interest in the development of the cluster, as the minister considers advisable." In order for the minister to deem his plan a success, he or she would merely have to seek out complimentary points of view. With a closed circuit so prone to confirmation bias, what exactly is the point of going into detail about that plan? It would be encouraging to find out if the province's Ministry of Economic Development had enough confidence in its abilities that it would commit to simple data drawn annually from Statistics Canada and third party researchers. I find it regrettable that the success of the province's economic development strategy will be evaluated by consulting with "persons or entities who have an interest in the development of the cluster, as the minister considers advisable."

Subjectivity times self-interest does not equal objectivity.

And, of course—surprise—there are more regulations attached to schedule 2, in section 9:

"The minister may make regulations,

"(a) prescribing requirements with respect to consultation;

"(b) prescribing additional items to be included in a draft plan or a final version of the plan;

"(c) prescribing requirements with respect to the review of a plan;

"(d) prescribing requirements with respect to ceasing the preparation of a plan or amending, revoking or continuing a plan;

"(e) prescribing requirements with respect to making anything public, including timing requirements."

Basically, schedule 2 is an announcement about the intention to make a plan that may be revised, revoked, rescoped or discarded.

While we're on the matter of regulations, I would like to highlight a couple of priorities flagged by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in the latest edition of its annual strategic review, Emerging Stronger, 2014. That report notes: "Business should engage the provincial government and participate constructively in a review of business supports, advocating the retention of those that work and showing a willingness to forgo those that do not.

"The Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services called for a re-evaluation of Ontario's business supports, which total \$3.6 billion in direct and indirect spending. It is unclear whether Ontario's hodgepodge programs are accomplishing their desired objectives, as the data on outcomes is often poor and inconsistent."

Here again, we have an observation about the inadequacies or absence of government performance measures. As this quote makes plain, it was first delivered in 2012 by the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, what we more commonly call the Drummond commission. That concern was echoed in the Ontario chamber's 2013 Emerging Stronger report and again in this year's document.

In response to these reasonable criticisms from esteemed professionals, this government could have opted to commit to a more stringent standard of reporting and evidence-driven policy-making that tracks outcomes, not just inputs and process. And yet, when it comes to laying out a bold economic action plan, this government is apparently still wedded to group hugs and squishy love-ins.

I made reference to a couple of priorities from the Emerging Stronger report, which was the result of teamwork from the Ontario chamber and the Mowat Centre. Another priority from that report that I would like to mention relates to the matter of regulation in schedule 1:

"Many regulated professions need to provide a clearer pathway for immigrants. Too often, immigrants are blocked from employment in their chosen occupation by licensing authorities that do not recognize their credentials. As a result, our immigrant system ... forces immigrants to invest considerable resources into retraining so they can find employment in the fields for which they

were originally selected during the immigration process. The Ontario Regulators for Access Consortium's Compendium for Best Practices and the Fairness Commissioner's Exemplary Practice Database (launched in 2013) highlight best practices in foreign credential recognition in the regulated professions. More progress is needed."

Speaker, highlighting best practices is a start, but it is clearly not enough. The problem is not particularly new—it was identified in last year's Emerging Stronger report, after all—and as ambitions go, it is a very worthy one. Why has that challenge not been taken up by this ministry, either in legislation of its own or as a schedule within Bill 176?

1650

Why, for that matter, does the Emerging Stronger document reference two government-funded agencies identifying practices on regulatory practice? Perhaps that's a box we're better off not opening here today. I suspect that we would fall down a rabbit hole and the time available to us today would quickly disappear.

Instead, I would like to use the mention of best practices as a springboard and relay some of the key takeaways about regulatory review. These were laid out in November 2011 in speeches by Cass Sunstein, who was then serving as administrator of the United States government's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs—OIRA, for short—and is now a professor at Harvard. Perhaps he has had occasions to bump into the former Premier at campus mixers. In any event, these eight key takeaways are part of what Sunstein described as a more enlightened and rational system that promotes good government through reflection and choice.

Two points, in particular, relate to the bill before us this afternoon. I quote from Professor Sunstein's speech on November 30, 2013:

"We know that intuitions ... however compelling they may seem, and however suggestive that regulation is helpful or harmful, are both unreliable, and that advance testing of the effects of rules, as through pilot programs or randomized controlled experiments, can be highly illuminating.

"Continuing scrutiny: We know that it is important to explore the effects of regulation in the real world, to learn whether they are having beneficial consequences or producing unintended harm. In short, we need careful assessments before rules are issued, and we need continuing scrutiny afterwards."

By putting evidence front and centre, the process improves the likelihood that debates such as these remain cool-headed and relatively depoliticized.

As part of OIRA's work, President Obama mandated a government-wide look back at federal regulation, compelling all agencies to re-examine their significant rules, and reduce, improve or eliminate them as the upshot of that examination.

One thing that should appeal to all parties is the latent value freed up through the elimination of useless regulation. In the first two years of OIRA's modern approach to regulation, the Obama administration was able to realize a net benefit estimated at over \$35 billion. This is the scale of the possibility that is being squandered by lack of ambition. This is the kind of opportunity cost that accompanies government requests to green-light measures that simply perpetuate the same old same old, under a new slogan.

I think at this point, it would perhaps be instructive to remind ourselves of some of the history of this ministry. As fans of the Legislature channel, we remember from previous seasons that the face of government cabinet is prone to change. Sometimes, as we saw just yesterday, the government reshuffles. On top of that, sometimes the cabinet is large and unproductive; sometimes it's lean and efficient. The government is an example of the former; Ontario Progressive Conservatives have committed to the latter.

We would reduce the number of provincial ministries from 24 to 16, and of course, as the cabinet expands or shrinks, ministries are added, amalgamated or moth-balled. This is especially true when a new government is formed and is eager to rebrand itself as different from the one that came before.

But sometimes it is part of a wholesale refresh. The Minister of Finance was, of course, at one time known as the Ontario Treasurer of the Ministry of Treasury and Economics. Another artifact of days gone by was the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology. It was a fairly no-nonsense, meat-and-potatoes title, but as we entered the last decade of this last century, this Legislature set aside that ministry and formalized a new one to take its place.

In 1990, this House passed the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade Act, and because of the focus of the bill in front of us today, I would like to focus on key details from that document that I feel are relevant to Bill 176.

Speaker, I would begin with subsection 4(2) of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade Act:

"Annual report

"(2) The minister after the close of each year shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

This underlines the point that I made earlier regarding the creation of annual reports. It is a redundant detail of Bill 176 because the minister is already required to submit an annual report on his ministry's activities. If that yearly account is wanting, it is because the minister has chosen to omit detail.

Moving on to section 6 of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade Act:

"Power

"6. The minister may, in exercising his or her powers and carrying out his or her duties and functions under this act, assist the private sector by,

"(a) promoting investment and trade opportunities offered by Ontario;

"(b) encouraging the introduction of new technologies, products and processes to improve productivity and competitiveness:

"(c) providing financial assistance and incentives;

"(d) collecting and disseminating information on such aspects of the provincial economy and industries as affect Ontario's industrial base:

"(e) providing direct services to industry for domestic and foreign sales:

"(f) advocating the interests of the business sector within the government of Ontario, to other Canadian governments and to foreign governments;

"(g) consulting with industry, labour and government authorities to develop programs which help Ontario in-

"(h) assisting industry in any other manner considered to be proper."

This is an action list with considerable, virtually comprehensive, scope. In fact, reviewing the provisions contained with this act reveals that the measures that have been in place since 1990 already enable the minister to conduct himself in the manner described in Bill 176.

This legislation is not required. If the minister feels that his ministry is ill-equipped, he is also empowered to form advisory committees and appoint their chairs and vice-chairs.

Moreover, section 2 of Bill 176 specifies that the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment "may prepare plans with respect to the development of clusters"-not "shall"; "may prepare plans." Under Bill 176, taking action is optional. Even while he claims to be setting the bar higher, the minister has given himself an easy out. In short, nothing here is what it seems.

Early in my remarks, I mentioned that certain legislation is empty, ineffective or deceptive. Bill 176 is per-

haps all three.

Aside from the technical circumstances I have levelled at this bill, I would say that one of the other disappointing things about this proposed legislation is the way it drapes itself in the language of partnership even as it is delivering a political wedge.

As I have said, Bill 176 is an empty and frivolous bill on a weighty and serious matter. Ontario's economy, its businesses and workers, our children and grandchildren

deserve better than this bill.

The action items contained within Bill 176 do not require additional legislation in order to become reality; simply a government with vision and willpower. Even if you dispute that claim and feel that Bill 176 fills a legislative void, this bill is constructed so loosely that it amounts to absolutely nothing.

By putting us in a position to vote against what they will claim to be measures to ensure greater accountability, strengthen red tape reporting requirements and invigorating economic cluster development—all of which falls apart the moment you tune out the Liberal talking points and look at what is actually contained in this billthe contents of this legislation are in contradiction to the title for political purposes. If opposition members vote

against this empty, ineffective legislation, as seems highly probable, the government will be able to say we voted against the Better Business Climate Act. But as a matter of fact, the act doesn't really do anything to improve the province's business climate. It doesn't create a single private sector job. It doesn't touch the real issues or cost drivers that are universally considered by those investing in Ontario. The content of this bill makes a mockery of its title.

1700

I would argue that Bill 176 is designed simply to wedge the official opposition by suggesting that we are voting against what this government will doubtless describe as no-nonsense measures to reduce regulation and create economic partnerships. Again, Bill 176 gives the minister an extravagant amount of leeway for defining what constitutes a burden. If passed, it will allow the ministry to cherry-pick examples of burden reduction while simultaneously failing to address legitimate problems on a larger scale. The short title might just as well be the Liberal Lip Service Act. That is, frankly, outra-

Red tape costs Ontario businesses as much as \$11 billion annually in lost productivity. It impacts households

Our economy faces real challenges. It doesn't need gimmickry and more fat contracts. Real action is necessary, not just empty promises. I had hoped-

Interjection.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I did listen intently to the member from Burlington. I have to agree with some of the aspects in terms of ending this regulatory burden that we regularly feel in this House. It speaks to the dislocation between the speech that was read and the bill that is supposed to be debated here today.

I'll simply reference three spots where I find that dislocation. First, they bemoan the loss of manufacturing jobs but champion increased free trade and interprovincial trade, with portions of deregulation making the vast components of those free trade agreements. I can tell you, as a cluster, Windsor and Essex county used to be the hub of manufacturing. Those jobs are no longer clustered; they are fragmented and they have gone to the lowest-wage jurisdictions on the planet because of enhanced free trade, open markets and globalization. That doesn't make sense to me.

Second, again in terms of the regulatory burden that we see in this place, prior to us debating this bill, the member from Renfrew introduced a regulation, an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act that essentially, as I heard the explanatory note, would exclude vehicles with snow on them from driving on the highway. That's a regulation that they just introduced. I wonder how that will affect the businesses in this province. You can't have snow on your vehicle if you want to go on the highway. That's quite interesting.

The third would be the fact that Stephen Harper is the champion of deregulation. I would imagine that he is. This is also the Prime Minister who just increased the price of a stamp by 57%. That's certainly going to affect businesses in our country.

I would say this: Please, connect the dots. Regulation is a burden because it is supposed to be burdensome. We do have to take a look at duplication in regulation, but, my goodness, make a coherent argument when you're talking about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When I was in high school, corporate tax rates were about 47%. Today, they're about 23%. For our generation, income taxes—as I told you, I did my mother's income tax and then compared it to mine. My father paid 25% more income tax when I was in high school than I do today. Our sales taxes are at an all-time low—the lowest corporate taxes in generations; the lowest income taxes in generations.

To the member for Burlington: You are in one of the lowest-taxed jurisdictions in the world overall. Our generation, unlike our parents' and our grandparents', pays less taxes. So that's nonsense.

Second of all, we have the most educated population in the western world. We've taken the infrastructure spending in this province, from the time when her party was in power—and I'd like her to listen to this—which was a measly \$1.4 billion, to now \$14 billion—\$1.4 billion. According to the OECD, that's less than 3% of the amount of spending that you need to maintain economic growth. That's where they would take you. We could balance our books tomorrow if we spent at the same measly, crappy level of under-investing in our education and health care systems.

The highest infrastructure spending since Drew was Premier; the highest level of education. What did they do? Not only did they massively disinvest—a 90% overall reduction in the average spending of previous Conservative governments—they massively reduced the spending on post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, we've added 160,000 places in trades—the largest expansion of the public education system since Bill Davis.

Our economic job growth is 440%; 80% of those jobs require a university or college education. It's the best job creation rate in the western world for a manufacturing economy and the highest percentage of jobs that are high-skilled jobs. These are not McJobs, but she wouldn't know that because she isn't economically competent, nor is her party or her leader.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to pay some respect to the member from Burlington, Ms. McKenna. I have great respect for her spending an hour on this bill and reading over 50 pages of notes that were timely prepared. Her colleague from Huron–Bruce as well—I know they've worked hard on the two issues in this bill. There are only

two sections in the bill. I think you did a remarkable job explaining it, and I commend you for drawing attention.

I should put on the record that two of the famous quotes that she used will go down in history as quite complementary to your insights. One of them was that this bill does nothing more than create more red tape. That's extremely important, because this bill is only five pages. In fact, it's only two and a half pages in English and two and a half pages in French, and to spend an hour on it is quite an achievement.

Her other quote is that the bill is simply lip service, in the act. It's Liberal lip service, and that's a true statement as well. If you look at the two sections of the bill—I think the viewers would be wise to get a copy of Hansard; in fact, it would be twice the size of the bill itself, because the bill itself is really, as she said, lip service. There's no action in here. The minister does not have to do anything, but he may create regulations. I think you made that argument as well.

Schedule 1 in itself has four statements on making regulation powers, and in schedule 2 there are five particular prescribed requirements in creating regulations. So in fact, your first general statement that it creates more red tape in itself is absolutely borne out by looking at the bill itself.

It really comes down to a simple measurement of how you think the government is doing. The people watching today should ask themselves, are you better off after 10 years of the McGuinty-Wynne government? I know the answer is no, but I think you should look carefully. This bill is another sham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks for the opportunity just to speak to this briefly.

You heard earlier today in question period about the loss of another manufacturing facility in my riding, in the riding of Welland. JMC Steel out of the US is idling its factory. We hear that around the province week after week. We hear about businesses idling their operations or closing their doors. The member from Windsor–Essex spoke about this and about the Conservative policies on free trade. In this particular instance, it's the dumping of cheap Korean steel into Canada at a price that is considerably lower than we can even buy raw material in this province and across this country. That's because of low wages and low production costs abroad.

I think the Liberal government, instead of spending their time on Bill 176, the Better Business Climate Act, would be better using their time if they actually talked about a better business retention act in this province. They should spend their time reducing hydro rates, coming up with a plan to reduce hydro rates, because as we're giving our hydro away to the US, our businesses are following. Municipalities are offering incentives. They're giving companies free taxes for 10 years, and they get their hydro rates at a fraction of the price that our businesses in Ontario have to pay—another impact to the JMC Steel factory in my riding.

The employees in my riding say that the government should be spending their time—not just the federal government. We need a national manufacturing strategy, for sure, but the provincial government as well needs to do their part in lobbying the federal government to make sure that these kinds of manufacturing facilities don't continue to close week after week across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Burlington has two minutes.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Speaker. Sorry, my throat is sore today.

First of all, we clearly hit a nerve with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Facts are facts.

1710

Well-run provinces attract well-run businesses. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has suggested a range of ideas to kick-start economic growth. We would simplify the tax code and allow companies to deduct capital costs the same year the money was spent. We would implement a new tax credit for investors to help expand start-up companies.

Government should not pick winners and losers, and bureaucrats should not be making decisions about doling out funds to private companies. In seeking to map out the dynamic possibilities of partnership, it neglects the opportunities right in front of it. Stakeholders that have been name-checked in the course of bringing this legislation forward—stellar organizations such as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Region Board of Trade and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—have a depth and breadth of knowledge that could help to enrich the government's own knowledge base. Even the backbench cheerleaders concede that there is work to be done.

Ontario's economy is not performing at anything near its true potential, and it is incumbent upon the members of this government, which has held office now for 11 years, to stop laying blame elsewhere and own their responsibilities as well as seize the possibilities of this moment in history.

I support Ontario businesses and workers, and the Ontario PC Party is going to stand up and do what has to be done to make this province not a have-not province.

Also, for the last seven years we've been above the national average for unemployment. Our kids, our youth—16%. What are we doing in this province? This is for our next generation, our children, to have a life that they deserve, not to have a government that does lip service and creates more regulatory burdens for businesses that are suffocating and dying here in Ontario.

We need a government of the Ontario PC Party to turn this province around, with Tim Hudak to make it the best it can possibly be. We've done it in the past; we're going to do it in the future. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure and an honour to get up in this House and talk about Bill 176, the Better Business Climate Act, 2014. I actually want to extend a

thank you; yesterday I did have a technical briefing on this piece of legislation. The staff from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade came to the office—their research, policy and political staff—and I thought that we had a fairly productive conversation about why this legislation is in front of us and what the principles are that are driving it, if you will.

The bill arrived at second reading very quickly, I think that needs to be said. It made it a challenge for us who are on this portfolio to actually reach out to stakeholders in the business community about what they think about the bill. I am looking forward to actually going out and sharing the bill with a number of clusters that are in the Kitchener–Waterloo area, in the Niagara area, in the Welland area, and getting some real feedback about what this means on the ground for those businesses.

I do also want to say that in many respects this legislation is somewhat contradictory. You have one section, the burden reporting act component, and then you have the other side, which is the partners for jobs and growth, which actually has some burdens attached to it. I think that it's safe to say that the NDP caucus has some outstanding questions about this piece of legislation, and I'm going to work through some of the issues that we see.

The first part of the act: The cumulative regulatory burden on businesses in Ontario has risen to become, at least from the perspective of business, the number one economic development issue.

In fact, just prior to coming down to the House for duty today, I was meeting with a company that is focused on green energy, and they identified very clearly that they would welcome one portal to advocate for their businesses across the province instead of dealing with ministry after ministry after ministry. It's time-consuming, it's costly and it actually is a burden to do business in the province of Ontario. They made that point very clearly to me.

It's interesting because in Bill 176 the issue of publishing an annual report detailing what the government has done about unnecessary regulation is a small but positive step. I think everyone will acknowledge that the regulatory burden is real.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington just showed me the provincial offences book from 2012. It is 3,500 pages long. It's a huge book. The problem with the government is that they add regulations and they don't release it.

In the briefing yesterday, I asked how we're going to measure whether or not we are being successful in reducing the burdens. I was told very clearly by the staff that they have set a goal of reducing one per ministry per year and having to go through that. I must wonder how they're going to choose which burden. How do you measure which one is most burdensome? So there are some challenges with that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: They're a beast of burden.

Ms. Catherine Fife: A beast of burden, yes—and it's a good Rolling Stones song.

There are some outstanding questions about what that's going to look like. I was told, though, that there is a report and maybe—this is my portfolio. I haven't seen this report yet. It's called Fewer Burdens, Greater Growth. This is, I guess, another study. It happened and another report is out there which highlights how we can reduce burdens by \$6 million a year. So I'm going to read that because I think that's my responsibility to do it. This was also championed by the Open for Business folks at economic development and trade. However, there is far more that government can do. I think we can all agree on that.

According to the chamber of commerce, the following is also worth considering, so we are obviously going to try to inform this debate with some suggestions: publishing the rationale for any new regulations the government introduces, so having a rationale as to why these regulatory burdens are in front of us—I would love to know if that actually happens; conducting a public and transparent cost-benefit analysis when considering new regulations; and supporting outcomes-based models of regulation.

Given the fact that that book there is 3,500 pages long, clearly that has not been happening. So I think there is a practice of just adding to the regulations and not actually going through those 3,500 pages in a systemic way.

Streamline approval and compliance procedures between levels of government, specifically in the area of environmental assessments—there are some very contradictory practices within the environment ministry, and that's because we have not kept pace with the research that is out there. And there are some good intentional regs that exist, but they run counter to other pieces of legislation.

I am even thinking about how municipalities plan. There's the good Places to Grow Act, and a place like Waterloo region was highlighted for high intensification in the core, for instance, and yet the OMB just made a decision that said, "No, you don't have to do that. You can continue to build homes out on the outskirts and contribute to the sprawl, contribute to the infrastructure costs and contribute to the negative environmental impact of that kind of planning." So there are inconsistencies that exist within legislation and within regulation.

That's why, in many respects, it's a walking contradiction. This piece of legislation has a reducing burdens piece, but then it also has this other aspect, which I'm going to touch on in a second, around cluster development. It's really interesting, the collaborative competition principle, which is, I guess, driving the cluster development. I will say, though, that the cluster model is an effective way to bring shared knowledge and shared resources together, but we will question why you need a piece of legislation to actually make that happen. But I'm going to get into that in a second.

Adopt a consultative and evidence-based approach to establishing regulations—I think people think that this does happen at committee as we review legislation. Generally, people—there are some active listening skills that

happen and people feel that they have been listened to, but then I don't think it actually translates so much into action.

Similarly, we would like to hear in more detail about the process that will be used for identifying which regulations are ineffective and can be removed. I'm pretty sure that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington could give you a quick short list, right here, right now, and I'm sure he would really enjoy that process. I don't think the government would enjoy that process that much.

1720

We want to ensure that the regulations which would be removed as a result of the implementation of this act would actually benefit businesses, as is the intention of this bill. The staff that I did meet in the technical briefing—I do believe that they think that this is a good way to create a better, more positive climate for businesses in the province of Ontario. It really is in the details and in the implementation of the legislation.

I do think that the government is, after many years, now pushing to address red tape that they have actually been a part of creating. As the bill exists at present, there is not a clear outline of who or which body will be in charge of ensuring that the reductions to regulations are meaningful and helpful for businesses. This is why the consultation piece is so important: because we do know that government doesn't always do the best job, regardless of what the government is. I think that it's fair to say that businesses feel that they are living and breathing this business climate in the province of Ontario and that they have the knowledge which should inform policy and legislation.

We would like to know how the Ministry of Economic Development plans to work with the other ministries to identify areas of regulation which are particularly burdensome. That is a missing piece in this legislation. It's great for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to say, "These are our goals and we're going to do this," but how does that translate and trickle out to the rest of the other ministries? Where are the barriers for businesses within those other ministries?

Will the ministry involve stakeholders in the decision-making? We, of course, always fight for this. We've heard from stakeholders on issues such as the toxic substances list. The New Democrats have always supported health and safety. Actually, we've had some good success in this session to push the government to follow through on some of the safety regulations, in particular falls prevention, which was in the Dean report from 2010. It does appear that things may be happening—not fast enough for my liking, but they are nevertheless happening.

However, back to health and safety: In some cases, we realize that regulations can be arbitrary. A farmer must be able to plan her or his resources in advance of the season. If a substance is limited after a farmer has already entered into a contract with a supplier, it poses a significant financial challenge to the farmer. Farmers are not

shy. I think that we can all agree on that. When they come to lobby, their frustration over the inconsistencies in legislation and regulations is profound. Farming should not be a complex, layered sector that is filled with red tape. In fact, based on this legislation, if we did have a farming cluster we could probably just apply the same principles applied to farming to other sectors. We ask, therefore, that stakeholders be included in the discussions and play a significant role in the decision-making process of which regulations to change or eliminate.

The burden piece: Obviously, we all have shared concerns around that. Then the partnership for jobs and growth—this is in the technical briefing. I did ask. I said, "So assuming there's a cluster, theoretically, of, say, advanced manufacturing or a tech cluster, for instance, for KW, why would they come to the government and enter into a collaborative competition discussion about what they would need as a cluster?" Right now, clusters actually already lobby the government in a fairly coordinated way. Kitchener-Waterloo, for instance, has been actively lobbying this government for quite some time to ensure that they have the transit funding and the infrastructure to truly be successful. They've referred to it as innovative regional economies and strategic infrastructure. Their recommendation is a 10-year capital allocation for rail infrastructure that must be established by the province of Ontario and the government of Canada to support two-way GO train service on the Kitchener line—the CN North Mainline—in the 2014 provincialfederal capital budget.

In this instance, even though the Premier did come to Kitchener-Waterloo and made the promise of two-way, and even though that really isn't two-way—because we're not taking people from Toronto and getting them to Kitchener-Waterloo, which really is what two-way is about. You have an additional train in the morning and an additional train at night. That is not what the cluster, for instance, is requesting. They have made a very strong business case that Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo, which represent some of the best regions for start-ups in Canada—that the Toronto-Kitchener-Waterloo corridor is comparable to Silicon Valley in size and population, the difference being that Silicon Valley has a regional rail service.

I'm trying to just work through what this would look like. If they came to the minister and said, "Okay, we want to be part of this new cluster strategy," they are almost handing over some sort of autonomy, local autonomy, by saying that the minister would make available to the public an annual report with respect to actions taken by the government and then also by the cluster. The minister may make regulations respecting the report. I understand in principle that this formalizes some sort of a relationship between the cluster in the province and then the government.

Ms. Cindy Forster: What does the cluster get out of it?

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's the question. What does the cluster get out of formalizing this relationship? I did ask that at the technical briefing.

My feeling on the whole is that this legislation is not really for the clusters in the province of Ontario; it's to push the ministry really into the 21st century on economic development and to sort of formalize an approach by the minister around job creation and around cluster development. There's not a lot of upside to this relationship on the cluster side. So there's a plan that would be created:

- "2. The minister may prepare plans with respect to the development of clusters....
- "3. A plan with respect to the development of a cluster shall include the following:
- "1. A description of the cluster." If the cluster came to the minister, I think they know how to describe themselves; I think they know who they are.
- "2. An assessment of challenges and opportunities with respect to the development of a cluster." I think that if they have already existed and they are already advocating, for instance, transit, two-way GO, they already know what the barriers and issues are.
 - "3. The objectives and intended outcomes of the plan."

Most of the people who are affiliated with the Kitchener-Waterloo tech cluster, for instance, don't need a plan from the minister. They have a good sense of what they need to get accomplished. They would like some stability. They would like to know what the playing field is like in the province of Ontario, and of course, the most pivotal piece for them is to have transit and to have that infrastructure.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They don't need legislation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So that is the question.

"4. Performance measures to evaluate whether the objectives and intended outcomes of the plan are being achieved." This is already happening. The tech cluster in Kitchener-Waterloo is incredibly resilient. They know who they are. They know what their community is. They just don't know how to get some of their employees from Toronto to Kitchener-Waterloo in a very safe and fast way.

"5. A description of actions that could be taken by the minister, or the businesses or other entities that form the cluster, to assist in the achievement of the objectives and intended outcomes of the plan."

You can see the irony here, I hope. I hope I haven't lost everybody; I'm trying to make this as interesting as possible. One part of the act says that you're going to reduce the burden of regulations, and then the other half of the act says, "But we're going to create all these rules and regulations to make sure that you clusters know what the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is all about." To the best of my knowledge, I can't see why they would do that. I think it would be safe to say that they would have to build up some trust. The rules of engagement would have to be very clear. As they stand right now, I don't think that they are that clear.

Establishing a five-year plan for these clusters and how they engage with the government—I think it would be better to start it off perhaps as a pilot project, because to go whole-scale across the province, when I think it's safe to say that the government does not have a very strong record on job creation, is a big challenge. Right? So you would really have to sell it. There would have to be a pretty good marketing strategy. Usually, when you have a group of people who are looking to collaborate, it just doesn't happen in and of itself. There has to be something that incentivizes it.

1730

For instance, what's already happening in Kitchener-Waterloo, in the tech sector, is that they provide mentorship, and there is some social infrastructure and physical infrastructure like space and technology. There really is a supportive community. I'm a little concerned about how the ministry would be imposed on that, when I think that it's already working as it stands right now. Perhaps there is, for instance, a food processing cluster that would be looking for some guidance and looking for some cohesion and a way to coordinate their efforts, but it can't really be a top-down sort of model.

I've reviewed some of the chamber's recommendations as stated in the act, and for New Democrats this is a real source of concern. I want to be clear: New Democrats appreciate the value to society of effective, resultsoriented environmental, consumer and labour regulations. There are good regulations out there.

There could actually be some stronger regulations in some sectors like the construction industry, for instance. I just took a meeting this morning, and I think it's very clear that there is a major issue in the province of Ontario with the underground economy. It's estimated at anywhere between \$3 billion and \$6 billion in lost revenue, never mind the risk to consumers and the risk to workers who work in that economy. In the construction sector, the oversight could definitely be better. The supports could be better, and the regulations could be clearer and more simple—

Ms. Cindy Forster: And enforced.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And enforced. Thank you. That's excellent.

However, there is a growing sense in the business community that Ontario's economic growth is being held back by ineffective, overlapping and sometimes unnecessary regulation.

Again on this side of the House, we know that there are good regulations—regulations that keep Ontario safe, regulations that protect workers, regulations that truly protect the environment. That said, the overwhelming sense from the business community is that Ontario does not have an outcome-based regulatory approach, and New Democrats believe that this perspective needs to be taken seriously. I guess the question is, does Bill 176 truly address this, or can it be amended to be stronger or to be more streamlined?

That leads us back to clustering. This bill also makes some proposals on supporting economic clustering. As

I've said, I'm not going to argue against the wisdom of clustering. It's an idea that does make sense. It is an idea that is working in parts of Ontario right now. There is something in Boston, and I think there's something in Chicago. Montreal has been listed. You can see that the concept of clustering is gaining momentum already across the province. However, my question is, does the Ministry of Economic Development require legislation to do work that many would assume it's already doing? I think that is really the fundamental question as to whether or not we would support this piece of legislation or not. I think that you've heard very clearly from the PC caucus that they want nothing to do with it. Of course, they haven't really wanted anything to do with any of the budgets either, and they've missed opportunities over the last two and half years to get anything done. So I don't think that we should be surprised that the PC caucus has taken this approach.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We like to be consistent.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You are consistently not reading budgets.

I know that there are members of the PC caucus who would have actually liked to use the leverage of being in a minority government to, for instance, champion the rights of those with disabilities. I know that for sure. I'm sure that there are some economic strategies that the PC caucus would have liked to engage in through that budget process. But for some reason, they decided to not go down that road.

The legislation indicates that the minister must now introduce a plan for a cluster. I am assuming that there is some interest at this point on behalf of a cluster, and then the minister introduces a plan. But there are no specifics about how an area, either geographic or economic, would be selected.

Actually, this is an interesting point. When I had the technical briefing, I asked, how is the southwestern development fund or the eastern development fund or the rural economic development fund—how is that going to interact with this strategy? I think that, also, to be fair, is an outstanding question.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Monte will answer when he does his two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay, that's good. Maybe Monte will let me know.

Would already existing clusters be supported in an official capacity as a cluster or would new areas be selected and promoted? Who would be consulted on these decisions? How would these decisions be made? It's all very unclear, I think. To be fair, as well, we have never seen a piece of legislation specifically like this, especially with the two contradictory pieces.

Clustering isn't a new idea, though. The PC caucus is going to find this really interesting because you just spoke out against this piece of legislation. For the record, the Ministry of Economic Development announced plans to fund a biotechnology innovation program cluster in Ontario in 2003. I have the press release from that. Essentially, it would start the first phase of the Biotech-

nology Cluster Innovation Program—this happened in 2003. The BCIP, otherwise known as the Biotechnology Cluster Innovation Program, was part of the Eves government—a \$51-million biotechnology strategy that also included the medical and related sciences. So 11 years ago, the idea of clustering was actually raised by the PC caucus, sort of at the same time as the Liberals: at the end of an eight-year stint at that time.

The idea of clustering has actually been on the books for a long time. I think that it's taken off outside of this House. I think my fellow critic has made the case that maybe it should just stay out of this House. That said, the Eves government introduced the concept 11 years ago. Don't you find that interesting? Nothing? I don't know.

I'm going to take a step back and speak about clustering more broadly. Clustering, as it is described aligning skilled people, research institutions and corporate collaborations to build innovative ecosystems represents a significant opportunity to enhance economic growth across sectors of Ontario's economy. I fully, fully support that statement. I believe that if we could actually connect our academic institutions, commercialize the research, reduce the burden, to actually put sometimes government-funded research into play, especially, for instance, in the health care system—I mean, there are so many examples of research that the government has invested in, has supported, but then there are all these other barriers to getting that government-funded, governmentresearched and government-signed-off project into play, into the province. It's one of those very cynical, frustrated places people find themselves in when they have a really good idea and they have a piece of technology, actually, which would definitely help the people of this province, and people can't access it. Really, it's very frustrating.

The idea of clustering focuses on the competitive advantage over the comparative advantage, or increasing productivity through innovation instead of taking advantage of geography or circumstances to overcome input costs. The concept was introduced by Michael Porter of Harvard Business School and advanced more recently by such Canadian scholars as David Wolfe, David Robinson and Matthew Lucas. I know well the advantages that are gained by businesses operating in Kitchener-Waterloo in the tech sector, especially. The proximity of innovative firms, incredible universities and of talented, trained young people has spurred the tech ecosystem we all talk so much about. However, other regions of Canada have flourishing clusters as well and have been doing a great deal more to promote their clusters, supporting them through policy and investment.

When the member from Essex did his two-minute hit on the previous speaker—there are some very quick ways to actually stimulate the economy that are in front of us, really. I know from meeting with the young entrepreneurs at Communitech, for instance, or Velocity or Sandbox in Kitchener-Waterloo, that often these start-ups can access angel funding—family and friends—but it's taking that business to the next stage. They are desperate

for venture capital. If we could just figure out a way to get some of that dead money which corporations are sitting on and put some of that money into play, you would see a massive spring-back of the economy. Those are big ideas, but they certainly, in many respects, make a little bit more sense of formalizing a cluster government relationship-building exercise.

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We could talk a little about some of the other clusters, but we're not going to. In Ontario, though, I do see a tremendous amount of potential in Kitchener-Waterloo's tech sector, in the financial services sector in Toronto, and in the development of an advanced manufacturing sector in Hamilton and London, but these clusters need a government that supports them.

I will agree with the member from Burlington and the member from Welland when you talked about hydro rates. I just spent Monday meeting with businesses in Kitchener Centre and Kitchener—Waterloo. One owner, Yvonne from the Cake Box, sat down and talked in very real terms as a small business owner about how the hydro rates are affecting her. She's in the baking business, so obviously hydro is a major issue for her. She said very clearly, "I have had to reduce my staff hours. I have had to pull back. That's the only place where I can find the savings." And she has reduced her baking times, which obviously affects productivity. So it's very cyclical. The issue of high hydro rates is all connected. It's obviously connected.

Ontario can also support clusters by other means, like creating the infrastructure that businesses need. That's why I touched on the two-way, all-day GO service. I think that if I went through the history of how that announcement was made last week in my riding and how it's still being referred to as two-way, all-day, when it is not-even the commercials are running, paid for by the Liberal Party of Ontario. Just because you put it in an ad or just because you stand up in this House and say it's so does not make it so. I think that it's really important for people to understand that two-way, all-day means that that train takes people back and forth from Kitchener and Waterloo, including people from Toronto to Kitchener-Waterloo in the morning because there are jobs there. There are jobs in Kitchener-Waterloo and there is a lack of transit options for them to get to Kitchener-Waterloo.

If we truly want to support clusters and support that innovative spirit of business in the province of Ontario, then we have to get the transit piece right. We absolutely do. It has to be affordable, it has to be accessible, and it has to work for the people who need it the most. Not everybody has a car and not everybody can afford to get on that 401 and waste five, maybe six hours sitting in traffic. It's just not an option.

You do wonder why we have a productivity issue: It's because we are stuck in traffic. Obviously, when the Premier came to Kitchener–Waterloo and made this announcement, she was selling an idea that actually is not on the books yet. That's why we have made a commitment to follow through on the municipal and tech cluster,

if you will, and cost out that infrastructure project to make sure that that north line is working and is part of our transit plan.

We have some outstanding questions about Bill 176. I do appreciate the intention of it. Of course, we do feel that the business community and climate in the province of Ontario could be better. We are looking for creative solutions to make that happen. I'll be looking forward to the debate to see how we can actually make sure that a piece of legislation such as this—it may not be this—looks to be effective for the people that it's aiming to help and to grow.

With that, I think I will conclude my comments. Once again, I would like to thank the staff from the ministry for their technical briefing. I think that our work is cut out for us in the province of Ontario to ensure that we actually do have a positive business community, and that if clusters are part of that model going forward, the government knows their role. The clusters and the businesses know what the rules of engagement are, preferably a targeted tax credit, like the job creator tax credit, which for some reason this government refused to incorporate or embrace, even though it's working for other sectors, like Ohio, which courted away the Heinz company for \$520,000.

There are real solutions—low-hanging-fruit solutions, even, if you will. I've provided some questions and I've provided some solutions, and I guess we'll see who's listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo for her very thoughtful intervention. We've had this conversation in debate in the House about the manufacturing economy. The government's view of this is that the manufacturing economy is critical, but it's changing, much as agriculture changed from 100 years ago continuing to be a foundational part of the Ontario economy, to now less labour-intensive. We produce our food with many fewer people than we did in the first 60 or 70 years.

I've always given the example—people talk about losing 300,000 manufacturing jobs. If we had not gone through modernization, we wouldn't have that manufacturing there.

I listened to the member from Welland. Earlier, the member from Welland was talking about a plant. I give the example of Pittsburgh. In 1983 and 1984, Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania saw 104 of 104 steel plants close; 243,000 people in a city of 700,000 people lost their jobs. Today, Pittsburgh produces more steel than it ever has in its history. Do you know how many plants it has? Not 104; it has two. Do you know how many people work in the steel industry in Pittsburgh? Not 243,000, but about 300. Pittsburgh is the biggest steel producer with that, when over half the population of the city worked in the industry.

Wallaceburg, Ontario, under the Conservative government, lost 4,000 jobs in a community of 11,000. Why?

Was it some terrible thing Mike Harris did? No; the economy changed. The tool-and-die industry in Wallaceburg, under the opposition party's watch, collapsed. At the time, I spoke at your convention and gave that as an example.

We have created 440,000 jobs in the innovation space because we have an innovation economy. The production economy is changing to highly automated robotics, and we're producing more stuff. So can we just be honest about that with each other?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciated the comments that we heard from the member from Kitchener–Water-loo. I found it intriguing that she pointed out the flip-flop within Bill 176 onto itself. To use her words, on one side, the Liberal government is talking about reducing burden and, on the other side, they're talking about creating clusters in regulations to prop up that concept. I thought there was rich irony in that.

When we talk about reducing burden, I have to segue over to her comments on agriculture. I totally agree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. Farmers are not shy. Over the last few weeks, when we've been attending round tables, it's been very interesting to hear that the farmers' number one issue and the number one thing they are asking of us here at the Ontario Legislative Assembly is to, for goodness sakes, start reducing the burden of red tape.

In fact, there was one particular farmer who outlined very specifically how he has to interact with nine different ministries to conduct his business. That's why we said in 2011, and we're consistent today, that we would create one window for farmers to work with and use that as an example of how else we can enable business to be better in Ontario.

In my last few seconds, I'd also like to touch on the fact that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo talked about the underground economy and that we have to do more to ensure that that underground economy does not grow. I couldn't help but think of my colleague from Simcoe North. If he was here, he would say—number one thing, abolish the College of Trades. An example would be the fast-tracking of licensing of carpenters. Nothing more will drive an economy underground than the further burden of ridiculous legislation, and I was pleased to point that out today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to rise in this House. It was an honour to be able to listen to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. It was very thoughtful. She gave very thoughtful remarks regarding the bill that has been presented today.

I'd like to focus on the regulatory burden. In this bill, if I heard correctly, there is one regulation per year per ministry.

1750

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, that's a heavy workload. That's a big burden.

Mr. John Vanthof: That could be very effective. I am not discounting that; it could be could be very effective. But who picks the regulation? If it's just a checked box of, "Let's pick the easiest one to get rid of"—because some regulations are actually beneficial. Who picks the regulation?

Another deep-seated problem we have is, who ensures that the regulatory burden is moved along through the process? Part of the problem is not even the regulatory burden itself; it's the process part. If you find the right person in the right ministry, you can move things along, but if you can't find that person and you get transferred—I have people in my riding, farmers, business people, who want to do things, and they get transferred from person to person. It's the same position, but different people. So just taking one regulation per year per ministry and saying, "Oh, yes, we're fixing things," Speaker, is not what's happening.

I think the member from Kitchener-Waterloo did a good job of explaining things we could make better. There are some good things that we could look at with this bill, but there are much bigger problems out there than just one regulation per ministry per year, and "We'll pick the easiest one," because sometimes we have to pick the most effective one, not just the easiest one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I want to commend the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I really enjoyed her presentation. I think she was bang on in many of the things that she was saying.

I also want to comment on the fact that I keep hearing doom and gloom over on the other side. I'm out there in the real world, and I can tell you, the Premier and I were at a plant, a bakery—you were talking about a bakery. We were at a plant on Monday where this bakery produces two million bagels a day and two million croissants a day. They have 1,200 employees. They are expanding, a huge addition to their plant. They transport all over the world, and 80% of their products go overseas. It is an incredible story. It was started out by two people who at one time were earning \$3.25 an hour. As I say, now they've got 1,200 employees.

When you take a look at our financial sector, it ranks—the actual number is third in North America and 11th globally in competitive ratings for global financial centres. I can tell you this: The World Economic Forum did a survey of all the banks in the world—not as to size, but as to liquidity, ratios, governance—and decided that out of the top 10 in the world, three of them were in Canada, which meant they were in Toronto, which is the financial centre.

The biotechnology sector: You take a look at a company like Sanofi Pasteur right here in Toronto. They have a world mandate for the Salk vaccine. They're the only

people in the world who manufacture the Salk vaccine. They are expanding. They have global mandates for many of their products. Take a look in your areas. In Guelph, companies like Linamar, companies like Magna, world leaders in innovation and auto parts.

We have a lot to look to, and we sort of denigrate everything that's going on and say, "Oh, it's all going to hell in a hand basket, and what are you going to do about it?" There really are great things happening in Ontario.

We can do better in some areas. We have an issue where the Minister of Transportation was talking about—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and the members from Huron-Bruce, Timiskaming-Cochrane and, of course, York Centre for their feedback.

I think the question is, though, is this legislation going to be effective? We should look through that lens when we look at every piece of legislation—or can it actually be amended to be effective? My job is to raise some questions about that.

I thank the member from York Centre for raising some good examples of what's happening. There are good things, obviously, happening in the province of Ontario. In Kitchener–Waterloo there is such a resilient spirit around start-ups and around moving towards advanced manufacturing, but I will say that it does appear in many respects that this Liberal government has truly given up on manufacturing, because there is a disconnect between the research and the innovation piece and modernizing the manufacturing sector. We still need to make things in the province of Ontario.

We should be championing the food processing field. We have the best farmers, the best agriculture. We should be advancing this cause. It should be more focused on creating a cluster and having the Minister of Economic Development develop a five-year plan. I truly question whether or not that is needed.

What we do need to do is address hydro and we do need to address the red tape and the regulation. There must be a faster way to address those 3,500 pages of regulations.

I was touring the Brick brewery last Friday. That's a manufacturing business that, against all odds and in the face of policies put forward by this government that are actually stopping them from hiring more people, is producing some of the best products in the province of Ontario.

I agree: Advanced manufacturing can be successful in the province of Ontario. The question is, will Bill 176 help or hinder it?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being four minutes to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 27 March 2014

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 27 mars 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to give a few comments on Bill 165. It being Thursday morning, I'm very happy, because on Thursday morning I know that tonight I will be seeing my wife and my kids; it's going to be nice. I actually get the opportunity to return home a little bit early, so it's going to be really nice, because I'm going to be able to have supper with her tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I spent the last constituency week touring many, many communities in my riding, particularly the northern part of the riding and also the western part of the riding, meeting with community members. Just last weekend, I met with a lot of the mayors and councillors at the Algoma District Municipal Association meeting up in Sault Ste. Marie.

Time and time again, we are in challenging times. Municipalities are finding it challenging to meet their services, to meet the needs of their constituents, and they're providing the good services that are always provided to the communities of Algoma–Manitoulin by their leadership. But mostly, what I heard also, meeting up with constituents, is the tough times that they're in. That needs to be heard loud and clear across this province: that every day people, particularly the people of Algoma–Manitoulin, the ones that I represent and that I have the honour of coming here and speaking on behalf of, are having a really tough time. They're having tough times with their hydro bills. That is the biggest concern that I heard while

I was going throughout the riding over the last week during my constituency week. Time and time again—and not just hearing complaints, but people coming in—there was a sense of desperation in them. There was a sense of frustration that they're being abandoned. Those are just some of the concerns.

There were various other ones, particularly in northern Ontario, in regard to the condition of our roads—again, the lack of oversight and the lack of quality in regard to road maintenance. That's not news to you, Mr. Speaker. You've heard that consistently from our party and from our northern caucus members, time and time again over the last couple of months.

It's funny—not that it is funny—but a lot of that is now being highlighted because southern Ontario, for some reason, is getting snowstorms—something that didn't happen very often—and it's become an issue. It's always been an issue for us in northern Ontario. Those are some of the issues that I've been dealing with.

I do have some good news—it pertains to G165 as well, and I'm coming around to that—and that is that there are good things happening in Algoma—Manitoulin, particularly in the northern part of the riding. Jobs are being created, there's a mill that has reopened, there's potential for people to come in and actually set up with their families and move on and prosper.

But we have a challenge: We don't have the workforce that is required in order to move them along. I'll
just give you an example. There's a mill up in White
River. The White River sawmill has now reopened, and a
lot of the people had moved out of the community in
White River. They had moved out—they've gone to the
oil sands. A lot of their key individuals had moved out to
other regional communities. They just need to provide
the wages and the dollars so they can provide for their
families.

So they were really having a crunch time finding the workforce that they're looking for, but they did secure a workforce, and there are a lot of people who have now moved up the ladder from minimum wage jobs into the sawmill. But that has created a huge labour shortage within that community—not just that community, but the region. These are your service providers that are there as well, with key municipal individuals that are needed.

You have your hotels that still need good labour to come in and take care, because tourism season is coming up. They're looking and they're very short on the labour workforce. I've been trying my best to relay that information, and I'm glad I've spoken to both ministers so that we can start having that discussion in regard to what

programs are in place to address some of that labour shortage.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that we have jobs in Algoma–Manitoulin. But we just don't have the workforce that will go there. The challenging part is attracting those workers to come there. Not only in restaurants and hotels, but also at gas stations, and there are other supporting employment opportunities there in the region that we just can't get the workforce up there for.

One of the reasons why is because of our minimum wage. It's hard for a family to come up to that area and set up shop and be attracted to come up, because it actually snows and it gets cold sometimes in northern Ontario. But I've always said, and I've been a firm believer, that once we have you, once we have you sitting in our community, once we get you to come to the community, you will recognize why northerners choose to live in northern Ontario. You get a really true sense of what it is, as far as being part of the community; that your issues are their issues. People will come, but we have to develop those policies and we have to take those steps in order to get the people there.

One of the steps we have brought forward—I recognize that the government has brought their plan forward; it's a step. But I just want to put on the record what we'd like to do, as far as what our vision is. It's not a vision that is just looking at one sector. It is a vision that is going to bring all of the individuals who are concerned in regard to the discussion around minimum wage, including those who are most marginalized and most need that increase to the minimum wage. But it also includes the small businesses that are going to be affected. I'm going to just read that to you, Mr. Speaker:

"We have a plan in regard to supporting not only those that are marginalized but also small business, as well as the lowest paid workers in the province, by phasing in a series of reductions in the small business tax rate, while increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour over two years."

So it's not a sudden blow. It's a modest increase over the next couple of years to start getting those individuals interested in coming back to good opportunities to set up with their families.

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The plan is economically responsible and will help lift hard-working Ontarians out of poverty while allowing small businesses to keep driving our economy forward. Based on the minimum wage of \$11 an hour as of June 1, 2014, the NDP are proposing a three-part plan which includes a 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$11.50 per hour on June 1, 2015; a 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$12 per hour on June 6, 2016; and an annual cost-of-living increase with four months' notice for businesses. The increases to the business—and like I said, there are two sides to this discussion, so we also looked at small business. For small business, we would look at a reduction that would be effective to small business tax corporations, and is as follows: a reduction from 4.5% to 4% as of June 1, 2014; a reduction from 4% to 3.5% as of June

1, 2015; and a reduction from 3.5% to 3% as of June 1, 2016.

That is an approach that the NDP have taken. That is an approach that we've had with our discussions, not only with some, but with all. It's an approach that we believe answers some of the questions for some. It brings them up to a wage. It gives an opportunity in a community like White River, with these modest increments that are in place, to have the ability of attracting people to their community. But we really need to get those right policies in place. Again, I need to stress this, because these are forefront concerns that are there on the part of the people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

If we don't take the time, if we don't challenge ourselves, if we don't build those right policies in order to address the concerns of affordability—and I'm talking about energy costs, minimum wage so that people can make a respectful wage so they can provide good opportunities for their families—we're still going to be left behind and they are going to be left behind and regions of our province are going to suffer from this. Again, there's a lot of great things that are happening in Algoma—Manitoulin, but I want to really make sure that those policies that will complement not only job creation but affordability measures are there. These are just some of the small steps that we're taking with the minimum wage.

My time is up. I wish I had more time, because, I have a lot more to say on this and how it would benefit, but I will sit on those notes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm pleased to rise to talk a bit about Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. When I look at all of the issues people in my constituency of Pickering-Scarborough East have come to see me about, this one certainly has been on the top 10 list for sure, as it impacts so many people. I think what I'm also hearing now is that in addition to the wage increase that we're making come into effect to \$11 on June 1, the benefits of this bill are appreciated because the minimum wage will be revised annually by a percentage equal to the percentage change to the Ontario consumer price index. It includes all special wage categories, such as students and liquor servers. They will have their salaries increased by the same percent. If this bill passes—excuse me, I've got a cough thing going on—the first CPI would be announced by April 1, 2015, and take effect October 1 of the same year. That gives suitable notice and time for both workers and business.

I think what people welcome about this is a fair and predictable process, rather than what we've seen before, where a lot of people have a lot of opinions about what the minimum wage should be and when it should be changed. This brings some predictability to go-forward decisions about minimum wage, and it sets up a process by which minimum wage will be determined. This, of course, fits into our commitment as a government to create a fair and prosperous society and a stronger econ-

omy that we can all enjoy as Ontarians. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure, here on a Thursday morning, to listen to my good friend from Algoma–Manitoulin. He certainly brings a very unique perspective from the north and the concerns there and how hard life is there, and how this will, perhaps, improve the state of people of modest means. I always say he speaks directly from the heart and from real experience, and I thank him for that.

As it would be known, I may be speaking next on this. He mentioned the cost of heating your home in the north. I would say across Ontario, any person of modest means is struggling under the unacceptable load by just heating their home. It's not just the bad electricity policy; it's propane; we see now natural gas is going to apply for a 40% increase. Electricity itself has been described, but it's also gasoline; it's home heating oil. I heat with home heating oil and it has doubled in price, as propane has.

These are the things: The minimum wage is certainly the topic this morning, but who is getting hollowed out here are the people of modest means—not all seniors; certainly people who are working one or two jobs. Minimum wage is a popular thing to discuss, I suspect. I would say what we should have are more jobs and then allow performance and other things to determine income. Minimum wage is becoming a bit of a political football, technically, and I am suspicious of the Liberal government any time they do anything. Their motives need to be questioned.

It's not just this debate here this morning; I'll have a little bit more to say about it. I listened yesterday to the scandalous contract on the Pan Am Games and the security thing, which is another part of—they're going to spend more money and we're going to get less service. That's what is most troubling.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on my colleague's submission here this morning. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin obviously has a clear understanding of his region and of his riding and the various regional economic conditions that the people in his riding face.

What I heard of his submission was his attempt to educate and inform the government of some of the remedies that could be put in place to ameliorate or to alleviate the issues, the road blocks that, in some respects, our government created in terms of the ever-increasing cost of hydro, in terms of road maintenance for northern communities. These are vital components to a healthy regional economy and they're ones that I think, if the government took an active role on and a proactive role, they could have anticipated. They could have anticipated a labour shortage, given the demand for development in the north, particularly around the Ring of Fire, and how that translates into other market segments that require

skills and new labour. But that has not happened, obviously. He has informed you of some areas the government could put emphasis on and put a priority on.

Of course, when it comes to the minimum wage, as New Democrats we are always prepared to deliver good ideas, intelligent ideas, that make sense not only to the debate but to the people who are affected by the debate. When we talk about the minimum wage, we're not only identifying to the government that they can go further—they can raise the minimum wage higher to acknowledge the income inequality—but they can also support small businesses with an offset that actually makes it palatable for them to increase the minimum wage.

I commend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his submission and I always appreciate his dialogue in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to make three points on this minimum wage debate. First, let me just point out that this increase in the minimum wage is building on a strong record. In fact, since 2003, this government has increased the minimum wage by some 50%. We have not forgotten the less fortunate in our society.

The second point I want to make—it's a very important one—is what this act does. It brings predictability to the question of the minimum wage. We're debating this today. Every time there's been an increase in the minimum wage in the past number of years, it's been a time-consuming debate. It has eaten up a lot of time and, in some cases, aroused a lot of frustration. What we have here now is that we've set the minimum wage at \$11 and we've indexed it to the consumer price index. So we're not going to have to debate this every couple of years and get all those tensions to the fore. It will happen automatically, and that's important.

It's important for business. They can plan their costs over the next decade. They know that each year they can check the consumer price index and this is going to be their increase in costs. There's predictability for the minimum wage earner. They can factor that into their budget for the coming year. This is a very, very important factor, and it's the fair thing to do.

In my last 18 seconds, I do want to just comment that I'm troubled that the NDP, at the initial go-round on the minimum wage, was completely absent from that issue. And now that the debate is here in this chamber, of course, they're up to the eyeballs in the debate. Where were they at the start?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to welcome all the comments that were made to the Minister of Consumer Services. Yes, it's a step in the right direction—a step—and there are a lot of other steps we can take that will complement not just increases to the minimum wage but affordability measures. I think we've been very up front, and we've been providing you with those ideas. I hope

that you're actually going to take them in, within your caucus, and they're going to be reflected in the upcoming

budget, whenever that comes.

To the member from Durham: I enjoy our conversations, and it's too bad that once this question period is over, people don't see the amount of discussions we have with our colleagues around this room. Many of us make choices, as far as having those discussions and building those bridges, and I really want you to know that I have appreciated the opportunity and the discussions I've had with you, and I know how passionate you are about your riding. I really want to thank you for having those chats and taking the time to have those discussions with me. Of course, the concerns you have in Durham are very much the same concerns throughout this province: gas prices and your discussions in regards to hydro in your area. They're all part of the puzzle. All of those are part of what we're going to do as far as affordability measures.

The member from Essex stated that, you know, there are good ideas. There are good opportunities in regards to the job creation tax credit program that we have provided to this government. It's up to the government to take the initiative to act. This owl that sits on the wall behind us means be wise, in your decision-making, that you take in those ideas and, when you deliver those ideas, that you

move on them.

To the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs: Yes, you're right. It is a step in the right direction in regards to the minimum wage, but you did talk about predictability. I can tell you, from the people of Algoma-Manitoulin, that if things don't change, you can predict that their hard life and their challenges are going to continue with them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further

debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I wish I had an hour, because this bill deserves that kind of attention in terms of the content of what's been said by the previous speakers on this bill. I would say that I could use an hour.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Unanimous consent? I seek unanimous consent to have more time.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can you specify exactly what you're requesting? I only heard a piece of it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll try to stick to the 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker. I was provoked into that outrage.

In the very brief time I've been given to speak on this, I think we have to put a bit of context on Bill 165. Let's put some context on it. I put a few notes down, listening to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. He just brought a practical approach to this thing, and in his last remarks he used the term "predictability." That's really a good place to start. Predictability is one element of this. Tying it, in one section of the bill, to the consumer price index in Ontario, I think, is appropriate. It will desensitize actually, the consumer price index has been kind of flatlined recently because the economy is stalled in Ontario, and it's probably stalled across Canada, for that matter.

We're a small country in a global economy, and so that's the context.

Here's what has happened. Let's just look at a small slice of the forecast pie here. Let's just look at the last 10 years in Ontario. If you want to learn about the future, look to the past. Look to see what has happened in history. It's usually a pretty good indicator of what's going to happen in the future.

Sticking to the theme of predictability in Bill 165 is this: In the last 10 years, the—this is quite troubling. Ontario needs more than a minimum wage. When the Liberals first took office, only 3.5% of the workforce was making the minimum wage; today, about 10% of the workforce is making minimum wage. We've seen the travesty in Ontario of Kellogg's, Heinz, Caterpillar and other companies moving to the States. Our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli, has mentioned it pretty well every day trying to get to the bottom of when they're going to have a budget in Ontario, what they are hiding from us, and the \$4.5-billion gap.

The problem here in Ontario is that there are a million people without a job. Some 300,000 have lost work. We need to focus on well-paying jobs and on bringing back what Ontario once was. Ten years ago, this country and

this province were stronger.

I say to you, with all due respect to Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act—in fact, I can tell you this bill is quite a small bill. For those who are listening, it's actually four pages. It's actually three pages if you just skip the first page. Here's the first page; there are about four lines on it. It's about a page long and it does two or three things. It sets out, "Until September 30, 2015, the amount that is the prescribed minimum wage for the following classes of employees," and then it breaks down a number of different classifications, whether they're students, whether they're serving alcohol, or whether they're seasonal workers.

That's a shameful statement on Ontario. I think for the last five economic cycles, we've had the highest unemployment in Canada in Ontario. Can you imagine? Once the heartland of the economy of this province, it now has the highest unemployment. The only good jobs in this province are jobs working for the governmentwhatever government, at any level.

I don't deny the fact that we need to have good-paying jobs. I worked for General Motors for 31 years, over many years, and I would think that I raised my family on it. Where are those jobs in Ontario today? As our leader, Tim Hudak, says almost daily in our briefings before we go to question period: "Remember, John, it's about jobs and the economy."

He cares about youth unemployment. What is the strategy here for youth unemployment?

Our colleague here, Garfield Dunlop, talks about the trades, and what's the strategy for trades? We've got a tax on trades today, the College of Trades. What value does that add to the employment of young people today? I question the motives and the strategies of the McGuintyWynne government. It makes me nervous about the future in Ontario.

We're discussing Bill 165, and in that context, I have a few other notes. I would say, now that the province is looking at this predictable minimum wage income of \$11 or in that range, that it's a sad strategy for Ontario. It's a deflection. The next thing she's going to talk about is we're going to solve this problem by having a pension for everyone. I hope they tell the truth about it. I know they've got strategists working on it, but I'll tell you this: the current way the pensions are struck, if it's tied, as some people are suggesting, to the Canada pension, the Canada pension never was, and was never intended to be fully funded. It never was, it is not today, and never will be continuously funded. It's never funded like a private company. A private company has to fill it on an ongoing basis, and then if the stock falls or the product falls or they have a recall, boom, they are out of debt. What happens? Almost all of the pensions except HOOPP, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, are not funded. They are not funded. The teachers' pension is not funded. None of them are funded. We found out Ontario Hydro's pensions are not funded. These are future taxes.

Be assured that this government—in 10 years, the debt that we have now has doubled and the deficit has doubled. That's the operating shortfall; it's about \$12 billion. The interest on servicing the debt—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope the member is going to tie that back to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with all respect, I'll refer back to Bill 165. The plan here today that we're talking about is a page of information which we support—I want to be very clear we support it—but it's in the context of the economy that we're talking about.

Unemployment: We shouldn't be talking about minimum wage. We should be talking about jobs, having less red tape and having affordable electricity to have the fundamentals of our economy.

Our leader has a plan. He has put it on the table. It's called the Million Jobs Act. They don't want to talk about that. They're not even talking on the minimum wage bill. What is it they want to do?

I'm suspicious, when yesterday in question period—this is related, too—we talked about the Pan American Games. We talked about the security contract. It ended up that now it's been flipped over to the OPP as another investigation ongoing. It turns out they accepted an American bid from a company that has been charged for violations under the security act, and they are paying more for an American company—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will warn the member, you drifted again; if you would speak to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it's in that context that minimum wage will not solve the problem. The people still won't be able to afford their electricity and they still won't be able to afford to put gas in their car or food on

their table. What they want is a job, Mr. Speaker. I am crying out this morning—I wish I had more time. But this morning, what I really want is for the members on the government side to step back and bring forward a jobs plan.

Bring forward a budget so we have some certainty and predictability and clarity.

This minimalistic conversation this morning on minimum wage is troubling. It's almost pathetic, and that's what we're spending our time on when Ontario is slowly slipping behind the rest of Canada.

The future of our young children—I look at the pages here; I hope you have a bright future. We have an education system that needs some repairs. We have the most expensive tuition in all of Canada now, and they talk about all these support programs. No, you don't qualify for them. That's the problem.

The minimum wage: I would hope that we would have a discussion on it. I would hope it would go to committee so that the proper implementation—and the last thing I want to say that is fairly relevant: Setting the minimum wage doesn't cost Kathleen Wynne and her government one nickel. It's downloaded to the employer and the employer says, "I'm running a Tim Hortons here. If I have to pay them \$10 or \$12"—whatever that number is, he's either going to increase the price of the coffee or lay somebody off. Period. Because the payroll is not changing. There are going to be fewer people sharing it, that's all that's going to happen, or they will call in their son or daughter to say, "You're going to have to work on Saturdays now."

I just don't get it. This is not a plan for minimum wage. This is the current McGuinty-Wynne plan for Ontario: minimum wage jobs. We have real jobs, jobs with some vision and some kind of connection to innovation and creativity in this great province of Ontario.

This bill really does very little and I would say it won't solve the problems for the people who have been crushed in the last 10 years by exorbitant electricity prices and exorbitant gasoline prices. The HST, which is a tax on everything, has increased by 8%. Whether you're getting your hair cut or your taxes done, you are going to pay 8% more under Kathleen Wynne than you would under any other government. It's simply wrong. This bill fixes nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I don't know how many other opportunities I'm going to have to speak on the comments of my colleague from Durham, but I want to state again that I really do enjoy the opportunities and discussions that we've had, the shared ideas and views. Really, I think we'll both agree to the statement that we both make choices that are best for our constituents back home. We speak on their behalf and we wear our hearts on our sleeves. I'm somewhat sad that I don't know how many more times we are going to be able to have that community. I might have to go visit him in his backyard one of these days, in order to have a pop.

The only thing that really makes us maybe different is that we talk about our issues about making jobs available for people across this province. We talk about affordability measures. We talk about hydro costs.

Again, I want to thank him, along with his caucus members, for supporting my private member's bill on the HST so that we can remove some of the costs on home heating for people who were at home. That's what working together means.

Again, I want to stress that it's unfortunate that Ontarians look at question period and sometimes they judge in regard to the whole fiasco that goes on during that time. They don't get to see the discussions and the bridge-building that goes on when the cameras are off.

What really makes us different is where we list those priorities, in what order and how much importance we put on those. It comes to choices, and this government has to make a choice in regard to not just minimum wage but hydro costs, gas costs and jobs. All of those are part of the puzzle, and we have to make the choice. We have to take the initiative in order to bring in those policies that will benefit all of our community members at home. It's part of a bigger puzzle. We've just got to put the pieces together. That's what we're here for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It goes without saying that I always enjoy the comments from my colleague the member from Durham. Many of us say in Peterborough that the member from Durham was the greatest export out of Peterborough about 50 years ago, and Peterborough's contribution to the world.

I have always recognized, and the member from Durham knows, the great contribution of the O'Toole family in my community of Peterborough. Actually, on the street where I live in Peterborough, he's got cousin George. Cousin George is right down the street and, of course, George puts up the appropriate sign at election time. So I appreciate George's support.

But let me say, in terms of minimum wage, that during my municipal career of 18 years, I chaired social services twice for the city of Peterborough. I know one of the key things that was always mentioned to me by people, not only anti-poverty groups but business interests in Peterborough, was to look at ways to increase the minimum wage, to make sure that there's a path forward that was consistent and transparent, so that they know what was happening.

I want to comment that Stuart Harrison, who is the general manager of the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, and my good friend Allan O'Dette, who is a Peterborough native, who is the chair of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, both support this approach. They had input and insight on how this particular policy was developed. As Allan said to me on many occasions, as we raise the minimum wage, it provides a higher degree of disposable income, which allows for economic activity to take place.

It was the chamber that provided strategic advice in terms of the panel that was put together by then-Minister of Labour Naqvi to provide a path forward, particularly on minimum wage.

I think it happens to be the right approach, and I think it's sound public policy on a go-forward basis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I think the first question I ask myself is, why are we here? Are we doing the best for the Ontario taxpayer and the people who are asking us to do our jobs?

When you look at the fact that for the last seven years, we are above the national average for unemployment; when you look at the fact that in Statistics Canada, the underemployed are at 27%—youth unemployment is at 16%. We have 400,000 people who have stopped looking for a job, and we have 600,000 who are on unemployment at the same time.

These people are saying to us, "Is the plan to get more people on minimum wage?" I don't think so. I think those people are exhausted and actually want to have a job. When you have almost tripled the amount of people on minimum wage, what does that say about this government? Because there is no plan. There's no way moving forward on how to make this have-not province any better than it has been for the last 11 years.

I had someone say to me the other day: "What is the most important thing?" Well, for us, with Mr. Hudak, it is to do the million jobs plan. Our plan is focused on getting people more than the minimum wage, and paycheques for people who have a part-time job or who are looking for a full-time job.

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Our concern about the minimum wage right now is that almost 10% of the workforce is on minimum wage. In 2003, as the member from Durham said, 3.5% of people were on minimum wage. I think people want to have a party that is going to turn this province around. People will say to me, "What separates you, and what's different?" Here's what's different: When you look at past behaviour, it's indicative of the future. When you look at what we had when the NDP left, we had an \$11.3-billion deficit. Then the PCs got in; not only did they balance the budget four times, the only party to do that—and now where we are, right exactly where we were with the NDP, with everyone leaving and going to other jurisdictions because we don't create the environment here for people to want to be here.

We need to make a change and make this province a have province again, and we can here on this side.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Windsor West.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor-Tecumseh.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Windsor-Tecumseh—my apologies.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No apology needed, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people from Windsor-Tecumseh, and

sometimes from Windsor West as well, so thank you for that.

Much has been said about the minimum wage, and I was looking last night at where the rates are actually going: from \$10.25 to \$11; student minimum wage, from \$9.60 to \$10.30, if you're a student under the age of 18 and working less than 28 hours a week; if you serve liquor and you get tips, the minimum wage goes from \$8.90 to \$9.55; hunting and fishing guides—the member from Algoma-Manitoulin would know about the fishing guides going from \$51.25 to \$55 if they work less than five hours a day, and double that if they work more than five hours, and it doesn't matter if those hours are consecutive; homeworkers, if you work in the home and maybe you do some sewing for a manufacturer, your wage will go from a mandatory \$11.28 to \$12.10; if you're a student doing work in your home-maybe you're doing some programming for a computer company or a high-tech company—you get the homeworkers' wage up to \$12.10, as opposed to your minimum wage.

I would like to take the opportunity, again—as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin has mentioned, the member from Durham, who, as you know, Speaker, has indicated that he will not be seeking re-election—we will certainly miss him here in the NDP. I've only been here a few months, but I have always appreciated his candour and his guidance, and his sense of humour. It doesn't always come across to the people at home when they see the member from Durham stand up, sometimes they think he's scowling, but that's just his hidden sense of humour. He has been a great delight—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. The member from Durham, you now have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to start by saying that last night the Ontario Legiskaters played hockey.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What happened?

Mr. John O'Toole: We lost by a couple of goals, but it was a very close and very exciting game. I want to put on the record that the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who is in trouble over the closing of agriculture colleges, is a very decent hockey player, and he was kind enough to pass the puck to me, and I scored the fourth goal. I feel very good about that. We went on to lose the game, but it was fun, and that's the kind of thing that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was talking about: that we do actually enjoy—despite what you see on television, when we're not dealing with head-on issues, we can be sensible and sensitive and get along. He certainly would be welcome in my backyard for a pop at any time.

The member from Peterborough always speaks fondly, generally, indicating that I should have been a Liberal, technically—but my cousin George has made mistakes in his life, I understand that. I would suspect that he might want to talk to Scott Stewart in the next coming election to see if, perhaps, he should have a different sign.

I would say that the member from Burlington, yesterday, in this House, was offended by the Minister of Transportation, and I've felt badly ever since. I wanted to

incorporate that into my speech, that we should stick to the policy and not the personalities, and try to be a little bit respectful there.

I would say that the member from Windsor-Tecumseh has been a real breath of fresh air in this House since the day he came. He got the Minister of Transportation to look at the Windsor bridge and to make some corrections there. He should take full credit for that—and the minister to listen to him.

Anyway, on this bill, Bill 165, it's clear that the minimum wage—we agree to it. There's a lot of work to be done to create real jobs in Ontario. That's our position, and we'll stick to our position about creating jobs for young people in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further

debate? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It will be my pleasure to add my 10 minutes to this debate.

The first thing I want to put on the record is that I have followed and supported as best as I can the campaign that has been asking for a \$14-an-hour minimum wage. I fully understand where those people are coming from. I wasn't always a politician. I was the executive director of the community health centre in Sudbury. We had the corner clinic, which was our outreach for the homeless. Right next to it was the food bank. I got to meet a lot of the people who came every second week to the food bank, and those were full-time workers working minimum wage—for a lot of them. They came with their kids, they came with their families, and they couldn't make ends meet.

When they came and lobbied me and said, "We want minimum wage to be set at \$14 an hour," I got it. I fully understand. It would mean no more humiliation in the food bank line. It would mean no more coming up short at the end of the month where, by the time you pay rent so that your kids have a place to live, there is no money left to buy them new shoes for them to go to school. There's no money left to buy them a nutritious food basket—never mind nutritious food; to buy food, period. You have to go to the food bank. And all the rest of it, the humiliation and degradation that comes from living in poverty.

I know a lot of people who are still struggling with not being able to make ends meet. Yet, they work. They are hard workers. They get up every morning. They go to work. Whenever there's a shift of overtime, they will take it. If they can work more hours, they will. They do everything they can. But when you make \$10.25 an hour and your rent, so that you have a bedroom for your kids to sleep in, is close to \$1,000, I'll let you do the math; it doesn't leave a lot of money left at the end of the month to pay for clothes, transportation and food. And God forbid one of your kids gets sick and you have to pay for medication or a pair of glasses or anything like this.

They are the working poor. They want minimum wage to go up to \$14 an hour. Then the index would set in so that they never fall behind again. I completely get that.

When we put the policy together, we also listened to another group of Ontarians that are struggling pretty well just as much. We're talking about small—small business.

I brought a letter today from the owner of one of these small businesses. She is a new restaurant owner in my riding. She has tremendous menu offerings with lots of fruit, and healthy. She has been at it for two years. I will read into the record her letter. She's addressing it to me, and it goes as such: "I'm addressing you with this letter of concern regarding the minimum wage increase ... I encourage you to read this letter and contact me should you require additional information"—which I did. "It would be my pleasure to meet with you, the media and anyone else who may want to hear my concerns.

"The call for an increase to minimum wage ... could potentially close my business, putting 26 people out of work at my location, and potentially 30 more at my partner's location. My current financial situation cannot support a \$22,000 yearly increase in salaries." She had shown me her books. She had shown me how the calculations were made.

"I am proud to say that I must have almost the best staff Sudbury has to offer. It would break my heart to have to let these people go should I have to close my doors. Not to say what this will do to them and to the Sudbury economy as some of these people will" go on "EI and some on social assistance."

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She goes on to say, "My business is a Quebec franchise and they have different labour laws. We are unable to raise our prices according to what is happening in Ontario in order to help" with this increase. "I work pretty much seven days a week"—I can attest to that—"averaging 10 hour days to ... keep my cost down. After two years of being opened, I still cannot afford to pay myself a salary. What else is a person like myself supposed to do? The start-up costs are very high the first few years as I have huge loans. This increase will make it very difficult to continue." This is a person whose name is Denise Boyer. She lives in my riding and she allowed me to share her concerns.

But there are many small, small businesses, many confectioners, where the owners work full-time. They own a little business; they have two or three people who work for them. They pay their workers minimum wage and they can barely make ends meet; they can barely make a business of it. As time goes by and as their businesses become more stable, they will thrive. We know that a lot of small businesses thrive and survive.

So it was really to bring this into account. There are people who work full-time, full hours right now, who make minimum wage and who live in poverty. But there are also a lot of small businesses—I don't want to sound racist, but a lot of newcomers to my riding, to Nickel Belt, newcomers to our province, are small business owners, and this is a way for them to make a living, to work, and they hire a few part-time. If we were to increase to \$14 an hour right now, a lot of those small

businesses would not survive. Those people have come to see me. They have shown me the books.

So we have to come with some place to land. The government has landed on \$11 an hour and then increased it by the CPI, the consumer price index, in October of every year. For now, no matter what we do in this House, it's already set. This summer, minimum wage will increase to \$11 an hour, and I think my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh already covered that if you are a student, then your minimum wage will go from \$9.60 an hour to \$10.30 an hour. If you serve alcohol, your minimum wage will go from \$8.90 an hour to \$9.55 an hour. If you're a hunting and fishing guide—I have many of those in my riding—your wages will go from \$51.25 for the first five hours to \$55; if you work a full day—and a full day for a hunting and fishing guide is 24 hours your wages will go from \$102.50 to \$110. For the home workers, your wages will go from \$11.28 to \$12.10. But for most minimum wage earners, their wages will go to \$11 an hour.

What the NDP had put forward is to make the next two steps into law, to make sure that next year and the year after, we bring this minimum wage to \$12 an hour. That was a compromise that was livable for the small, small businesses and at the same time would help people who work so hard at minimum wage to make ends meet.

How do we balance this? We balance this with a small business tax credit. When you look at the millions of people in Ontario who work minimum wage, a lot of them work for big corporations. For the likes of Tim Hortons and Walmart and all of those, have no fear: Their prices have nothing to do with what they pay their workers. They will increase the cost of their goods based on what the market can bear, not as to how much it costs them to pay their workers more. They presently have the means to do this. It is really the small, small businesses that don't, and this is where the NDP put forward a more balanced plan with a decrease in the taxes that small business pays to try to leave a little bit more money in the pockets of the smaller businesses so that they can afford the minimum wage increases.

The bill in front of us has nothing to do with the increase to 11 bucks an hour. That increase will happen no matter what we do with this bill. We go into an election, this bill dies, we never get it out of this House to go to second reading—it will happen. It will go to 11 bucks an hour. But it talks about the increase. We are basically putting an increase on wages that are still poverty—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Certainly, it's a pleasure to speak after my friend from Nickel Belt, the member from Nickel Belt, who I hold in very high regard.

Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, obviously will bring a variety of opinions to the table. I think the process that has been employed to date is one that we should all be proud of.

The legislation actually acts on the recommendations that came forward from a consensus report from Ontario's Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. We went out. We talked to business. We talked to labour. We talked to youth. We talked to the representatives from the antipoverty community. This group held 10 public consultations around the province and received over 400 submissions from people who had a specific interest in this issue and the importance of this issue.

They came forward with some recommendations, and we have acted upon those recommendations, because, simply, we're a government that's focused on investing in people. We're trying to fight for that stronger economy in Ontario that we know we should all aspire to, and we want the good-paying jobs that go along with this. What businesses told us, and what people have told us, is that what they really want is a fair, balanced and predictable way of dealing with this issue on an ongoing basis.

As the previous speaker outlined, the minimum wage will be increasing to \$11 on June 1. Ontario, once again, will have the highest provincial minimum wage in the entire country. I think that's something we should be proud of. The 75-cent increase that would take place to bring it to \$11 accounts for inflation that has taken place since the last increase in March 2010.

The minimum wage has increased 60% since 2003. It's something that we put in place here, a special process for dealing with this into the future, that hopefully takes the politics out but allows the minimum wage to keep place with the consumer price index and with inflation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Nickel Belt always speaks with an empathetic tone. She started off talking about poverty and the plight of those people of modest income. She does that very well and very realistically.

She went on to relate the whole thing of minimum wage to the real marketplace of jobs itself, and she's probably right in terms of a Tim Hortons, where a family owns it. I know the one in my riding—a couple of them own a McDonald's and a Tim Hortons. They're fairly well-off people, I would say that. In one case, they own a Tim Hortons that's very popular, but they work there.

When you buy a franchise, you're actually buying a job. Some people buy a PhD, which costs a couple hundred thousand. But these people are buying a job. They don't make the recipe for Tim Hortons or McDonald's; they get that given to them as part of the job they're buying. In that case there, they may lay off a student and tell their son, "You're going to work more time," because their payroll isn't going to change unless they have more customers or change the price, and they can't change the price, because the franchise dictates what the price is. So you've got to look at it.

The same with Walmart, really: They do markets and do all that stuff, and they figure out what they need to pay. I don't agree with some of that new model of the

business strategy of low wages and keeping minimum wage down so that you only pay \$10 an hour.

I also want to congratulate the new Minister of Labour. I think it's important to recognize that Mr. Flynn has worked hard here, and I'm surprised he didn't get municipal affairs.

I will say this, though: The real truth of the story here is, in Ontario today—and the minister said it in his response—we have the highest minimum wage. We also have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. There's some message to be learned here. Let's talk about real jobs with real income so that people can have a decent life in Ontario. The last 10 years have been disastrous in Ontario.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add my comment and my support to that of the comments of my colleague from Nickel Belt, who, I think, is always well received in this House when she has the opportunity to offer her insight. Particularly, she focused on the reasonable, realistic and balanced approach that New Democrats have taken to this debate in terms of identifying, understanding and communicating the challenges, particularly with small businesses in our communities that are sensitive, that have a heightened sensitivity to fluctuations on either input costs, whether it be hydro or the minimum wage.

She referenced some small businesses in her community. We all have them. I can tell you that Lou Parish is an owner of a restaurant in downtown Essex, Main Street Diner. It's a wonderful place to go for breakfast. Lou is supportive of the initiatives that I have worked on but is concerned about an increasing minimum wage without any offsets to be able to buffer that impact.

It's something that we hope the government acknowledges. They haven't, in this particular debate; they haven't acknowledged that those small businesses in our communities, taking into account all of the other challenges that we have at this particular moment, deserve some support as well. They should be able to rely on the government to acknowledge that for them to be able to take on the added component of an increased minimum wage, they should also be rewarded and acknowledged for increasing the employment. We know—all of us say it at one point or another in this House—that small business is the economic engine in terms of hiring the new workforce in Ontario. We should acknowledge that and support them in that endeavour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the comments from the member from Nickel Belt, but I'm a little perplexed by where the NDP is coming from. I don't know whether they've been in the House recently, but we just reduced the employer health tax; 15,000 small businesses no longer pay that. It has been reduced dramatically for 60,000. It was one of the largest tax cuts for small

business. It wasn't lost on us that this was done prior to a minimum wage increase to give small businesses more room and ability.

We also, as you know, have corporate tax rates in this decade that are half of what they were when I was in high school. Corporate tax rates now in Ontario are amongst the lowest in the world.

If you want to maintain the kind of infrastructure—the twinning of highways, the money for the Ring of Fire, the money for rapid transit—that tax money has to come from somewhere. The NDP are always in favour of tax cuts these days, when they actually used to be a moderating force in politics because they understood, as I think Liberals do, that tax cuts don't help communities if that's all they get. People need hospitals; they need roads; people need higher incomes.

All of those small businesses benefit once the minimum wage goes up, because it doesn't just affect the most marginal and vulnerable employees; it actually increases the wages of the \$15-, \$16- and \$17-an-hour people who also get some pressure. Everyone who has done it has seen this as important. What they argue for is a \$5,000 tax credit for employers, when employers don't need that. What they actually need is, generally, a skilled workforce and for the working middle-class and modestincome people to have enough household income to be able to have breakfast at the diner more often and shop at the local convenience store. So I hope we can have a more rational discussion between the Liberals and New Democrats on this, because we should be on the same page.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nickel Belt, you have two minutes for your response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the new Minister of Labour for his comment, the Minister of Transportation, the member for Durham and the member for Essex.

The discussion about minimum wage is always tied to poverty, because the idea behind minimum wage is that if you work full-time, full year, you should not live in poverty. You should have a living wage. But why is that important? Well, in part, because it is one of the most important determinants of health. Research will show you that for every thousand dollars more of disposable income that a family has, their health status increases—so you can actually measure the percentage increase in chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, migraines, bronchitis—and the percentage goes down for every thousand dollars more of disposable income.

You have to add to this that there's a good chance that if you work for minimum wage, you don't have a vision plan, you don't have a dental plan, and you don't have a plan for prescription medication either, which has a direct effect on your health.

Unfortunately, if you look around and you see people with bad teeth, there's a good chance that this is a badge of shame that they are living in poverty. Why are they not able to have their teeth fixed? Because they don't

have enough money to go to the dentist. This is a badge of shame that we all wear when we see Ontarians who cannot afford dental care.

Then, without money, you don't have access to nutritious food, which is a determinant of health—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always great to stand here in this hallowed chamber and debate bills. It's quite an honour, and I just wanted to thank the people from Northumberland—Quinte West for allowing me to represent them here at Queen's Park.

I've been listening very intently to the debate and the ideas that we're exchanging here today. One of the great things about debate is that we get to see a different perspective, a different view of how we should move forward to try to make Ontario and each of our individual ridings much better for the constituents we represent.

Of course, with Bill 165, we're talking about the minimum wage act and what this does for the people in the province of Ontario, those who are not making a very good wage. I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we're obviously going to support this bill going forward. There are a few things, obviously, that we need to amend and tweak and look at once it gets to committee.

I want to share some of the concerns that I've heard from small businesses back home in my riding, in the service industry in particular. The member from Durham outlined very eloquently that these mom-and-pop businesses are struggling already. They hire students or perhaps seniors who are just trying to keep themselves busy or make a few extra dollars to pay their hydro bill, which keeps skyrocketing. These people who own the small businesses and are hiring seniors and young students are going to have to lay these individuals off, because they can't afford to keep these young people or seniors trying to make a few extra dollars on. It's very sad to me, because this Liberal government, for 11 years, has driven out 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Those are good, middleclass, wage-earning jobs. A lot of them are good union jobs with benefits, with pensions, and they're gone.

What we've had for the last decade with this Liberal government is a government that keeps raising taxes. Quite honestly, the minimum wage being raised to \$11 is going to be an insignificant amount of income for those earning that wage when their property taxes are going up and their hydro bills are skyrocketing out of control under the Green Energy Act, which we've asked this government to scrap numerous times. It's costing Ontario a billion dollars. Don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker; that's the Auditor General's report that says it costs a billion dollars to taxpayers here in the province of Ontario every year.

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I want to touch on something else as well. I have some ideas around what would perhaps—in my personal opinion, and that's what we're here debating—have a greater impact on low-income earners or the working poor, if you will, and that's raising the ceiling of income tax paid

to \$25,000. Right now, it's around \$16,500. If you make up to \$16,500, you don't pay income tax. On anything over \$16,500, you pay income tax. Raise it to \$25,000 and put the money back in the pockets of the working poor.

Study after study has shown—and the member for Durham has said this—that small businesses will actually lay people off. So instead of working for \$10.25 an hour, now you don't have a job. It makes no sense at all. There are other avenues you can take to actually put money back in the pockets of the working poor or those individuals.

I just also want to point out that a vast majority of people who are minimum wage earners are students and seniors. There are obviously individuals who have to work two or three jobs, who have a mortgage and mouths to feed, as the member from Nickel Belt pointed out, but a vast majority are students and seniors. It's seniors, like I say, who are trying to pay their hydro bills and keep the lights on because this Liberal government keeps driving up the cost of electricity. It's tied into the price of electricity; it's tied into what's happening in our manufacturing sector.

Tim Hudak and the PC Party over here, we have a plan that's actually going to create more middle-class, very good-paying jobs here in the province of Ontario, particularly in the manufacturing sector. That is one of the approaches that we fundamentally believe: The best anti-poverty strategy you could have is to have a good-paying job. But that's not happening under this current Liberal government. They're driving people away from the province of Ontario. They're going out west. They have to go to other jurisdictions in the United States or abroad, and this is very disconcerting.

The Minister of Transportation pointed out that they're very happy that they lowered the benefit tax for small businesses; 15,000 small businesses aren't going to have to pay that tax.

I want to just touch on what I refer to as—and the people listening at home, you need to pay very close attention to this, because you've started to hear little snippets of the Premier's ambition for this Ontario pension plan, the OPP. This is a sleeping giant, and it's going to crush the economy here in the province of Ontario if the Liberals are allowed to implement this strategy.

Now, we're all for making sure that individuals are secure financially when they retire but, under this Liberal government, you can't retire at 65 when you normally do; you have to work till you're 70, 75. But the Ontario pension plan—I just want to get this out there. In my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, for instance—if you just take the county of Northumberland, there's about 87,000 people. Let's say 50,000 for mathematical reasons, because I'm not going to be finance minister one day. Trust me, Mr. Speaker. But if you use 50,000 as the base number of individuals who are working, or you're an employer, what Premier Wynne is proposing is that each employee contribute \$2,350 a year to a separate

Ontario pension fund, and each employer has to match that \$2,350. You multiply that by 50,000, and that is \$117.5 million that is sucked out of the local economy in Northumberland county alone. I have to ask the Liberals today: What cost analysis is that going to have on small businesses in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West and across the province of Ontario?

This government's plan to come forward with their own independent, made-in-Ontario pension plan is going to bankrupt this province. It has to be put out there. The Premier is starting to talk about it. It's going to be a major plank in their election platform—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to bring back to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: How it relates to Bill 165 is that you can up the minimum wage to \$11 and increase it by 75 cents an hour for part-time workers, but if that part-time worker now has to contribute \$25 a week to a pension plan, you actually are losing about \$17 a week, so it's a fallacy. It's a shell game. This is going to cost the province a lot of money, and it's going to cause small businesses to go out of business. As was eloquently said here a few weeks ago, if you want to have a small business here in the province of Ontario, start with a big business. Right? That's the Liberal economics around this.

As I said, we're talking about the minimum wage and Bill 165. We're going to support it. But again, I think personally, there are other strategies, other avenues we can go down to ensure that people actually have money in their pockets, can put food on the table for their families, and keep the roof over their heads and keep the lights on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time here. It's always a pleasure. I must say you're looking rather dapper in the chair this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I am delighted today to introduce family members who are here today with Anthony Bello, who is our page captain this morning and who is from my riding. Today in the members' gallery we are joined by Domenico Bello, Margarita Lazarakis, Nicholas Bello—that's Anthony's brother—and his aunt and uncle, Clemente Bello and Denise Bello, who are here with us today from lovely Collingwood. I want to welcome them to the gallery and congratulate Anthony for being here.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, I'd like to welcome a volunteer in our office here at Queen's Park, Candies Kotchapaw, to the members' gallery.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to announce the presence of Marcy Skribe and Nicole Brunelle, and they're here from the Dental Hygiene Practitioners of Ontario. Welcome, girls, to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Further introduction of guests.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Walking in to work this morning, I saw a robin, so I'd like to welcome the robin to Ontario. We all know what a robin brings: six weeks until an election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Jocularity, jocularity.

Further introduction of guests.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Rob Gascho from OSSTF here to the House today.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from

Prince Edward-Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: I just wanted to update the House that last night the Ontario Legiskaters were in action in a big game over at the Varsity Arena at U of T. The Legiskaters fell again, this time to the Ontario Dental Association, but from what I understand, Mr. Speaker, it was one heck of a game: a 7-6 loss to the dentists. John O'Toole scored a goal, and Martin Regg Cohn of the Toronto Star had a hat trick last night for the Legiskaters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure all members would agree that (a) it's not a point of order, but (b) that's just too bad. I'm sorry to hear that happened. I was told that the name of the team is the Dentonators, along with the Legiskaters.

I will continue with introduction of guests.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'd like to welcome the parents of page Mira Donaldson up in the gallery. We have her father, Guy Donaldson, and her mother, Kelly Spicer. Welcome.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to welcome back the Leader of the Opposition, Tim Hudak, and congratulate him on being a new father. Having worked in the delivery room for many years, I know the joy and the happiness that a newborn brings to the family. Congratulations.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce Asquith Allen from the great riding of York South—Weston, who is here to see the proceedings this morning.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure on this side of the House to welcome back a proud new father, the leader of our party, Tim Hudak. I want to congratulate him on the birth of Maitland Hutton Hudak. Of course, we also send best wishes to our friend and his wife, Debbie.

Applause

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My fear is that he hasn't gotten any sleep.

On behalf of the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton here, visiting page captain Bani Arora are: mother Naupreet Arora; father Preet Arora; sister Saakhi Arora; friend Nikita Ghaghda; and family friend Oksana Darkeuych. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CABINET MINISTERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll just say to my colleagues on all sides: Thank you for the standing ovation for the birth of little Maitland. I presume that, though, was for Debbie because I actually had a lot easier part of the job. But thank you to all my colleagues for the very kind best wishes and congratulations.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, I noticed that when you changed your cabinet after Minister Jeffrey left cabinet, you decided to increase the size of your cabinet yet again. I think leadership starts at the top. This is the second time you have chosen to expand your cabinet.

Don't you think that was a mistake?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it was a mistake. We need people at the table to make the decisions and do the work that is required. I made decisions, and have put two people into cabinet who are very competent, experienced and are bringing very important voices to the table.

In terms of the size of cabinet, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the—

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No different than yesterday.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has 34 shadow cabinet positions, so that would foreshadow what he would do if he were Premier. We're not going there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No. You're not getting raises, you're not getting limousines, you're not getting extra staff in my shadow cabinet.

Here's the difference, Premier, and I think you know this: What you've done by adding on additional cabinet ministers now for the second time is it shows that you're more interested in appeasing Liberal MPPs than taxpayers in the province. That is the problem. I have hardworking MPPs, and I'm proud of them, but they don't get raises when they're in the shadow cabinet; yours do—they get drivers and staff.

Here's a contrast I want to raise for you. I visited a real cabinetmaker the other day, Surjit Aheer. He runs Hallmark Furniture. He's actually a real cabinetmaker, but he has gone from 40 employees down to four under the Liberal government because of the cost of doing business. I actually want to send a signal to him that we've got our fiscal house in order, that we're going to grow the economy. I want to see his cabinet business increase, and I want to put yours out of business, quite frankly, and bring one that's going to balance the budget in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is a gimmick that the Leader of the Opposition wants to focus on. He was a member of a cabinet under a previous government that had 26 members in it.

The fact is we have work to do in this government—

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll have to do what I didn't want to do. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order. The member from Nipissing, come to order, and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, come to order.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I heard someone say that I'm dismissive. I'm not dismissive of the concerns of the economy of this province. I'm not dismissive of the need to put in place the strat-

egies that are going to create jobs.

I am dismissive of a Leader of the Opposition who is putting forward a notion that would actually stop job creation in the province, that would cut the economic growth, that would force good jobs out of the province. That's what he's putting forward. We're not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final

supplementary. 1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Premier, you have been dismissive of the concerns of Surjit Aheer and other job creators across the province. You once called manufacturing job losses a myth. I saw it in person, sadly. They went from 40 employees down to four. I want to see them get back up to 40. That's why I'm focusing my million jobs plan on creating an environment for entrepreneurs like this to succeed and to hire again, to go—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You actually now have more cabinet ministers than do you backbenchers and non-cabinet members. I think that sends the wrong signal to job creators about your seriousness in balancing the books of the province.

Let me ask you this very directly. You are focusing on quantity rather than quality of your cabinet. I think you should reduce it down to 16. I think that's the appropriate size to send the right signal, and the big difference between you and me.

Premier, will you accept my challenge to actually, instead of growing your cabinet, reduce it down to 16, get them focused on jobs and the economy and send the signal to taxpayers that you're serious about balancing the books in the great province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition is focusing on cost here. There's a lot of work

to be done, and I have the cabinet that we need in order to make the decisions and put the policies in place that will move us forward.

In fact, the Leader of the Opposition's party is blocking a piece of legislation that would actually continue the freeze on MPPs' salaries. So if he's so concerned about the wages and the cost of MPPs in this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough. Order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We don't think it's appropriate for MPPs to have an increase. We need this legislation to continue that freeze.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that it would be very helpful if the Leader of the Opposition would work with us to freeze the salaries.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Look, Premier, I think you know this. As soon as you table legislation on an MPP wage freeze, wages are frozen. I think you know those facts. That's done. I've been calling for that for years.

But here's the opportunity, Premier: Let's actually do something that's going to save the taxpayers \$2 billion a year and send a signal to job creators across the province that we're going to balance the books and create an environment for success, to set up Ontario to grow the economy and create jobs again, to restore hope to people like Surjit Aheer and the 36 employees who used to work for him.

Why don't you actually amend the legislation and add an across-the-board wage freeze for the broader public sector that will save us \$2 billion a year? Will you do the right thing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that we are working across government—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There have been billions of dollars saved because of the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dufferin-Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —processes that we have engaged in.

We are going to continue to work in partnership with the employees within government and the broader public service.

The Leader of the Opposition wants a fight. He wants a fight with the people who do the business of this province, the people who deliver services in this province. He wants to fire education workers. He wants to fire health care workers. He's not interested in making the investments in post-secondary education and in health care that are necessary. He wants—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell you what I'm going to fight for. I'm going to fight for jobs. I'm going to fight for a better Ontario—I've got a plan to do that; it's called the million jobs plan—to get energy under control, to lower taxes, to balance the books in this province. It will work; it is proven.

Let me ask you again, Premier. You made another significant error. You weren't even in negotiations with the teachers' unions, but you still gave them a big pay increase. I don't know if that was payback for leadership support, but it was unaffordable. You weren't in negotiations, but you gave them a big pay increase of hundreds of millions of dollars.

I think we need to go in the opposite direction, so I'll ask you again. My colleague Mr. Fedeli, from Nipissing, is going to bring forward amendments to the Wage Freeze Act to broaden it to an across-the-board wage freeze for all of us in the broader public sector. It will save \$2 billion. It's the right thing to do. Can I count on your support for this sensible and thoughtful amendment to the legislation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since I have been in this office, I have been fighting for the people of Ontario, to bring jobs to the province. What I'm saying is, he wants to fight with the people who deliver services. He wants to fight with the people who are providing the education, the health care that the people of this province need. I do not believe that is the way forward.

I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that if he is really interested in being a leader in terms of wage freeze, he would get the legislation passed that would continue to freeze MPPs' salaries. That seems like a pretty fundamental step he should take. We look to him to work with us on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The legislation is going to pass; I've been calling for this for years. In my point of view, why don't we improve it? Why don't we actually make a big impact on the economy? I'm happy that I finally got the words "wage" and "freeze" out of your mouths at the same time, in concession. That was fabulous.

But let's go a bit further. Let me ask you this, too: I think that if cabinet ministers aren't doing their jobs, they shouldn't be in cabinet. If they can't even meet their fiscal targets, they should dock their pay. Another very straightforward amendment we want to make is, if your cabinet ministers cannot balance the books and they remain in deficit, just like they did in BC, let's dock their pay. Let's actually reduce cabinet pay to give them an incentive to prioritize and balance the books—a simple, thoughtful, straightforward amendment. Will you support that change to the bill and dock cabinet's pay if they can't even balance the books in our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every single minister in this government has worked within their ministries to find efficiencies. They have worked extremely hard to make sure that we exceed the targets that were put in place. That work is ongoing.

I don't need to punish the ministers. They're doing the work they know needs to be done. We don't need a punitive regime, which is what the Leader of the Opposition thinks he would need to put in place. Maybe that's what he needs in his caucus; that's not what we need over here. People do their work.

I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition we are going to continue to work to make sure that we bring business to this province, that we make the investments that are necessary. We are going to invest in post-secondary education, we are going to invest in infrastructure and we are going to work with communities to bring those jobs to the province. That's work that's happening.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let me first congratulate, on behalf of New Democrats, the Leader of the Opposition for the birth of his daughter Maitland—and his wife, Deb, and his daughter Miller.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Families across Ontario are wondering how they'll pay the bills. In the last year, our manufacturing sector has shrunk by 3%. Since the recession, we're still down 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and half a million Ontarians are looking for work. How can the Premier defend the status quo to the 500,000 Ontarians who are looking for work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have never defended the status quo. I have never defended the status quo the whole time I have been in government. The reason I'm in electoral politics—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am in politics because I do not defend the status quo. I believe there needs to be change and improvement, and that we can always improve.

So when I talk about our plan, which envisions investing in the talent and skills of the people of this province—the announcement that we made this morning, the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities and I, where we're putting out a request for proposals to increase the capacity of our post-secondary education system, colleges and universities working in partnership with each other to make sure that we have the capacity where there's growth in the province: That's not the status quo; that's progress. That's what we're fighting for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier seems more interested in attacking a job creator tax credit and defending her own status quo plan.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, College and Universities will come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The families who got layoff notices this week will tell you that they need more to be done. The Premier knows that when Heinz was laying off workers in Leamington, they were hiring workers in a state with a job creator tax credit.

Will the Premier tell families why she's defending the status quo and attacking a practical proposal that will reward job creators and create jobs for Ontario families?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to talk about the situation in Leamington and the Heinz plant for a moment. I want to acknowledge the Minister of Children and Youth Services because of the work that she did on the ground, working with the community. In fact, Canco is going to be able to retain about 50% of those jobs at Heinz.

We recognize that it's very painful when a business makes a decision about downsizing or leaving a community, but government's responsibility is to be on top of that and to make sure that there's a process whereby new jobs can come in or those jobs can be retained. That's the work that we did.

In terms of the tax credit notion that the NDP is putting forward, we're open to new ideas, but we want ideas that work. That is an idea that has been demonstrated, in other jurisdictions, not to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's interesting that the Premier talks like Republican lines out of the playbook from the US.

For families worried about jobs, all we see from this government is more of the same. They keep handing blank cheques to businesses that move jobs away, and driving hydro rates up. Doing the same thing and expecting a different result simply does not make any sense.

It's not working for people who lost their jobs at Energex Tube in Welland just this week, or 500 people who lost their jobs at Kellogg's in London, or 350 people who lost their jobs at A.O. Smith in Fergus. Why does this Premier keep telling people like these laid-off workers that her plan is working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have seen 100,000 new jobs created in the last year. The fact is that we are working with businesses across the province, whether it's through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund or the Eastern Ontario Development Fund or the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, to help them to make the investments that they will need to be able to compete globally. That's the kind of partnership that I think is very, very important. That's not the status quo. That means that when we work with Ford, for example, they are able to build a platform that's going to allow them to compete globally. That kind of advancement is absolutely necessary.

What we can't do is spend what we estimate would be \$2.5 billion on an employer tax credit that would actually just subsidize jobs that were going to be created anyway. That's what has been discovered in other jurisdictions, so we're going to learn from that, and we're not going to go down that road.

PAN AM GAMES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's funny how the Premier will spend a billion dollars for three jobs for members of her caucus.

Speaker, my next question is for the Premier. In 2011, Contemporary Security pled guilty to charges of violating its licence during the G20. Will the Premier tell Ontarians who made the final decision to select Contemporary Security for the Pan/Parapan Am Games?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite, the leader of the third party, for this important question.

Speaker, I think we have to remember that this is a very exciting opportunity for the province of Ontario. The Pan/Parapan Am Games is a world-class event that puts our province on the map when it comes to welcoming world-class athletes from the Americas and welcoming their coaches, their families, and 250,000 tourists.

This is an amazing opportunity to make sure that we also build world-class sporting infrastructure in our province.

Speaker, the success of these games relies on ensuring that they are safe and secure for all Ontarians and also for all the athletes who will be participating. That's why we are relying on the Ontario Provincial Police to decide on the plan for the security.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it seems like the minister didn't get the memo on accountability and transparency.

The government seems to be suggesting that the OPP chose Contemporary Security, but when an experienced Ontario-based security firm offered the very same services for \$14 million less, they didn't get a rejection letter from the OPP, they got it from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

What is the government trying to hide by distancing itself from that decision?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, our focus is to make sure that we have a safe and secure sporting event when the Pan/Parapan Am Games take place in 2015. Our priority is the safety of athletes, the safety of coaches, the safety of volunteers, the safety of families, the safety of all Ontarians, and that is why we are relying on the Ontario Provincial Police to make those decisions. They are the people who keep our streets and our neighbourhoods safe every single day. That's why the Ontario Provincial Police are responsible for the content of the request for proposals that was put out, they are the ones responsible for selecting the successful bidder in this particular case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What about the safety of the tax dollar? That's what I want to know. What about the safety of the tax dollar? Yesterday, the Minister of Community Safety and the minister for the Pan Am Games said the decision to choose Contemporary Security had nothing to do with the Liberal government, but the losing bidder, Reilly Security, got a letter from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services telling them that their bid hadn't been accepted.

You can play hot potato with this one as much as you like over there, but the buck has to stop with the minister in charge. If the government is so confident in the process, why didn't they let the auditor take a look and get some answers for the people who pay the tabs?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The entire process followed all the directives and the guidelines of the Ontario government in terms of having a fair and transparent procurement process. The entire process has been overseen by a fairness commissioner to ensure that the process is fair.

At the end of the day, we are going to rely on the experts on safety and security, and that is the Ontario Provincial Police. The opposition may be interested in playing political games with this issue; we are interested in making sure that we have a successful games in the Pan/Parapan Am Games, taking place right here in Ontario.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games.

The minister's oversight of senior Pan Am personnel is farcical. This week in committee, TO2015 sent Bob O'Doherty to pretend to be the senior vice-president of sport and venues. He refused to answer basic questions about the Ivor Wynne Stadium, the velodrome, the rowing and shooting venues, and clarified that he is only relevant at game time. So why have we been paying him \$292,000, plus \$17,000 in benefits, plus \$64,000 in expenses, since 2010? Minister, why are you paying this

guy, and who is actually responsible for sport and venues now?

Hon. Michael Chan: I wasn't in the committee, but all I can tell you is that for the Pan Am Games, 2015, the mandate is to ensure efficient and effective delivery of the games. This includes staffing, streamlining and organizational changes as appropriate. These staffing decisions are made by the CEO of TO2015, and I am very confident that Mr. Rafi will make decisions for the good of the games. We would hope that the parties opposite would support the games and Mr. Rafi's decisions.

While he is doing everything to destroy the games, the parties opposite are doing everything to tear down the games, we are not. We are promoting the games. We're going to have the best ever Pan/Parapan American Games in Ontario in 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Another question, another no answer. Minister, it's insulting to the games that you allow O'Doherty to take taxpayers for a ride, specifically to Miami, Rio, Mexico, Phoenix, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Barbados, Barcelona and St. Kitts, just to name a few. Minister, you seem to be as oblivious to your responsibilities as O'Doherty is to his. He was demoted on Thursday. He came to committee on Monday, playing at his old title, but wouldn't answer any questions on venues. Can someone please resend the email to O'Doherty, just to let him know that he has been demoted and doesn't waste committee time anymore?

1100

Consider this, Minister, my technical briefing for you: It's Allen Vansen, the pet expense guy, who assumed responsibility for sport and venues. Minister, do you think when O'Doherty wilfully misrepresented himself at committee, he committed contempt?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question.

On this side of the House, we understand how to manage the games. On the other side, they don't. Let me give you some examples here. The member opposite asked when was the last time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Let me help him. It was held in

2011.

Allow me to give another example here. Someone tweeted a six-inch toy Pachi in Sochi. The member opposite asked why the Pan Am mascot, Pachi, was in Sochi. Again, let me help him. Mascot Pachi was not in Sochi; Pachi is in Ontario, and Pachi is well and alive.

Speaker, through you to the member: Stop attacking the games. Stop attacking Pachi.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Families in Ontario want to see a government that will respect their hard-earned dollars, so they're asking why

the government picked a more expensive Pan/Parapan security bid.

Does this Premier agree with the editorial in today's Toronto Star calling for a review by the auditor because she has failed to be transparent with the public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has already answered some of these questions, but he will want to comment on the supplementary.

But what I want to assure the people of Ontario is that we believe that having the Pan/Parapan Games in Toronto and in the region is a very good thing. We believe that having a safe, secure games is of paramount importance. We believe that having the OPP make those decisions and make the recommendations to government—of course, the ministry was involved, but the ministry did not make the selection.

The OPP selected CSC, selected the company, and this company has been involved, as I understand it, with nine other Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is a company that has a demonstrated track record, and we are relying on the OPP—whose business it is to understand security—to make those decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Families deserve full accountability, and while New Democrats are asking who signed the contract with the US firm that has violated its own licence and why we didn't choose a more affordable option, it's clear that the decision was made by the government, Premier.

According to OPP inspector Mike McDonell, the commissioner signed off on the security contract. It then went off to the ministry for a final bid and the last bit of vetting, if you will. This lies squarely at the feet of the government.

Is this Premier going to continue to stonewall the auditor too? Or will she listen to growing calls for accountability and support a full investigation by the auditor of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The fact of the matter is that Ontarians want a successful world-class event in the Pan/Parapan Am Games in Ontario. They want safety and security of these games.

In the world that we live in, safety and security is a paramount issue, as you know, so we need to ensure that we work with the Ontario Provincial Police. We need to ensure that the Ontario Provincial Police, which is responsible for the safety of our streets and our neighbourhoods every single day, are the ones responsible for the safety of athletes, of coaches, of families, of volunteers, of all Ontarians, when it comes to these games.

The company it has chosen has vast experience in providing safety and security for multi-sporting events like this particular one, including the Winter Olympics Sochi 2014, Vancouver 2010, London 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016. This is not a subject for political games.

This is an issue of safety and security of the games and of all of Ontario.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, the Honourable Ted McMeekin. As the MPP for Etobicoke North, I know that developmental services are, of course, much needed. As a physician, I see first-hand the necessity, impact and benefit of such services.

Speaker, as you'll know, the delivery of these services has changed dramatically over the last few years. Our government has moved towards inclusion, in which people with a developmental disability now live as independently as possible out there in the community, where they want to be.

My question is this: Now that institutional care is a thing of the past—a relic from days gone by—can the minister explain the decision tree? How are the supports for individuals with developmental disabilities determined?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to answer the member's question. I want to say at the outset that I'm truly humbled to have the opportunity to be serving this particular sector during this dramatic time of transition. Families have told us that every adult with a developmental disability should be assessed in the same way. We believe that.

We've also heard that people should only have to go to one place to apply for supports. That's why our government created Developmental Services Ontario in legislation, so that, in fact, could happen. Before the DSOs, people with similar needs often received different levels of services and support. Today, there's more consistency and increased fairness for people applying for services.

However, transformation is a long-term plan, and we're going to continue to work with everybody in this House as we make the developmental services sector fairer, more flexible and sustainable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, not merely for your answer today but also for your ongoing heartfelt advocacy.

I appreciate your description of the transformation of developmental services as an important first step. However, many families across my riding and across the province need, demand, expect and anticipate that more action will be taken. As you know, Minister, it has been said that the mark of a just society is how it takes care of its most vulnerable. Ontarians need to know that their government gets that.

My question is this: What is the ministry doing to strengthen developmental services for Ontarians?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: To paraphrase the Premier, I'm not here to defend the status quo. We're here to advance changes. We're taking immediate action to improve ser-

vices, address housing needs and promote innovation in supports for adults with a developmental disability. We created an Inter-Ministerial Housing Task Force that will recommend innovative housing solutions—a good first step. We're also investing \$3 million in projects across the province that would increase community inclusion and help agencies pursue innovative partnerships. We're investing over \$1.7 billion in the developmental services sector, and we recognize that the demand is growing and we need to do more.

That's why I was so happy to support the idea of a developmental services select committee and why I'm looking so very much forward to their final report with recommendations.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, in what has become typical Liberal fashion, you're trying to lay blame on everybody but yourself when it comes to winter maintenance contracts. Like everything else, there's a right way to do things and a bad way to do things. Your NDP partners probably don't agree, but outsourcing can be a good thing. In fact, from 1996 to 2010, Ontario had a good outsourcing model for winter road maintenance, and it worked. It saved taxpayers lots of money and made sure our roads were clear and safe. Only since 2010 have there been severe issues with winter road maintenance. So what happened in 2010? The answer is: Your ministry changed the outsourcing model. You tinkered with a model that was working, and now it's broken.

Minister, will you finally take responsibility and admit the problems with snow clearing this year are yours and yours alone?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My honourable critic should take a little tour of northern Ontario, going back to 1996. They have a long laundry list of things that that government did to northern Ontario: undermined its infrastructure, disinvested in its highways, closed schools and hospitals. So no one up in northern Ontario was particularly happy when—

1110

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But we have contractors who are well paid. They signed contracts that had very clear performance standards in them. Most of those contractors are meeting those standards. My job as minister is to make sure that we get good value for tax dollars and that we have safe roads. My ministry is working hard to ensure that those standards are met, and I will not interfere or politicize the proper enforcement of law, or interfere

with public servants holding contractors to account to comply with their contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, once again, you were given a model from the former PC government that worked, and you broke it. I guess the solution going forward is for a new PC government to come and fix things in this province.

Minister, before 2010, we had a hybrid model that awarded area maintenance contracts for more densely populated areas and managed outsourced contracts for more rural areas, particularly in the east and the north. An engineer from your ministry wrote a report in 2005 that stated that the managed outsourcing delivery method "was expected to produce the most cost effective service in the province's rural areas." So the model that the former PC government set up not only provided better service, it also saved more money, yet your government completely ended all managed outsourced contracts in 2010.

Minister, regardless of the blame game that you continue to play in the media and through Twitter, can you finally admit that this failure is yours and yours alone?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should discover Google and click-click, because a lot has been written since 2005—a lot of studies and reports. We are now delivering snow removal and winter and summer maintenance contracts at a lower cost level, getting better value for dollar than they ever got when they were in government.

And they absolutely outsourced 100% of MTO, laying off 3,000 Ministry of Transportation employees. They did it at the time so that we could never change the model again in any substantive way.

Now, this model is working very well across the vast majority of Ontario, and we are reviewing it in a couple of areas where there are problems, where we have low populations and a lot of road, and the resources are not working the way we'd like—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There is a mounting crisis in London because of a lack of mental health beds. This week, we learned about 18-year-old patient Jenepher Watt, who was forced to sleep on the hospital floor in the emergency room at Victoria Hospital.

This is not an isolated case. It reflects a systemic problem. As a London Health Sciences Centre executive said today, "We cannot continue on this path and expect different results—it is time for a fundamental change." Can 27 MARS 2014

the minister explain when this fundamental change is coming?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you, Speaker, that I was very disturbed when I heard the story that the member opposite is referring to. I know that the hospital is investigating. They are understanding what happened, and we have to make sure that that does not happen again.

We are investing heavily in supports for people with mental health challenges. We are doing a lot to keep them out of hospital, out of the emergency department. Is there more we need to do? Absolutely, yes. There's more we need to do in London, and, as I say, I know that London Health Sciences Centre is focusing on finding solutions so that this does not happen again. But we also need to do more across the province to support people with mental health challenges. That's why we have made some significant improvements, including a 24-hour crisis line that is actually helping people get the right care.

There is more to do, and I'll speak further to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The minister talks about investing in mental health services and making improvements, but the reality tells us a different story. London is about to lose almost 150 psychiatric beds, and there isn't sufficient capacity in the community to meet the needs of patients.

One of my constituents in London West has been living at London Health Sciences Centre for 10 months because there is nowhere else for him to live safely in the community. The lack of community services means that patients with mental health diagnoses end up in crisis and are left waiting for days in the emergency room. I ask the minister again: What is she doing to address this crisis in London and across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be the last person to say that our work is done when it comes to providing care for people with mental health challenges. What I can say is, we are making significant investments, and we'll continue to accelerate that, because we know that by supporting people with mental illness outside of the hospital, we can reduce their reliance on hospitals. That work is well under way, and I hope the member opposite has actually had a briefing—and if not, I would be more than happy to arrange it—about how the investments we're making specifically in London are making a difference.

Have we done everything we need to do? No. Have we come a long way? Yes.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Energy. TransCanada recently submitted the project description for their proposed Energy East Pipeline project to the National Energy Board, the first formal step in the regulatory filing process. Some Ontarians have voiced concerns about the proposal, including some of my own

constituents in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, part of which the pipeline goes through, in East Hawkesbury.

Recent federal legislation has limited the scope and time allocated for National Energy Board hearings, and this can limit community and public participation in the regulatory approvals process.

Many Ontarians are interested in knowing what role the province will play in the regulatory process and whether they will have the opportunity to provide their input and express their concerns on the project. Can the minister please tell the House what role Ontario will play in the hearing process and what the government is doing to ensure the voices of Ontarians are heard?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for this very important question. This issue is a federal responsibility before a more restricted National Energy Board process. So when it comes to large pipeline projects, it is vital that all governments take the time to hear from experts—community, municipal, aboriginal—and business leaders to ensure that all voices can be heard during the regulatory process. That's why we have asked the Ontario Energy Board to engage with stakeholders, First Nation and Métis communities, and the public, and to complete a report that will represent the interests of all Ontarians.

The OEB is hosting community discussions along the proposed route, which began Tuesday in Kenora and will continue until April 8 with the last meeting in Cornwall. When Ontario intervenes in the National Energy Board process hearings, the OEB's work will ensure that the voices of all Ontarians are heard and their interests reflected in our submission.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Minister, for that comprehensive answer. I know my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will appreciate the opportunity to give their feedback and express their concerns on the proposed project. The consultations will not only be a forum for Ontarians to provide their input but also to learn more about the proposed project itself. This is important because my constituents are asking: What's in it for Ontario? What does the province stand to gain from the project? What criteria will the government use when assessing the proposal?

Speaker, through you: Will the economic benefit to Ontario be considered as part of the approvals process, and what principles will the government use when evaluating the project?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The supplementary is also a very important question. The project must generate significant economic activity for Ontario and move resources across Canada in a safe and economic manner. However, it is vital that the proposal only move forward once it adheres to clear principles. The highest safety and environmental standards must be met. The duty to consult with aboriginal communities must be met. There must be worldleading emergency response programs, including financial security for any environmental damage costs. Current consumers of natural gas must be protected with regard to price and supply. It must demonstrate economic

benefits and opportunities to the people of Ontario over the short and long term. Part of our government's work will be to identify those benefits and opportunities, and to ensure that when we intervene, we can do so having considered all the factors that are important to Ontarians.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Energy: I met with a local couple recently. They own a modest 790-square-foot house. Their last month's electricity bill was \$641—\$234 was delivery charge.

Minister, will you explain to this couple why their heating bill is so high? Is it the cost of transmission? The cost of regulation? Is it generation? The cost of fuel? Your Green Energy Act? Is it your debt retirement charge? Is it your HST? The list goes on. Is it because of the cancelling of the natural gas generating stations? Or is it your mismanagement and lack of a plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, it's their retirement charge, not ours. Over the last 10 years, we have been making the system reliable, clean and affordable. We took over a system that was in deficit, a system that was dirty. We cleaned it up with our new generation—more expensive than their dirty coal. That definitely put pressure on prices.

Realizing that there was pressure on prices, we put the 10% discount on the bill. Number two, we created the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—which can give individuals up to \$963 per year and a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors. We also have a Northern Ontario Energy Credit. We have taken significant steps to accommodate that. But he must remember that consumption has gone up by between 10% and 20% January over January because of this winter, and if you choose to deny that and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it is winter. Tell us something we don't know. I can't take that answer back to this couple, but I can guarantee cheaper rates under a Hudak government than under the Liberals.

Our rates were 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. You charge 12.4 cents at peak. Why is that? You have a surplus of power, but you subsidize unneeded wind and solar and then you spill hydro power, you shut down nuclear, you export at a loss.

Why the high prices? Is it OPG cost overruns? Is it Hydro One inefficiencies? High salaries? Cost of smart meters? Smart grids? Minister, what do you tell this couple? They can't afford to heat their house.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Order.

Mr. Mike Colle: Cheap nuclear energy. That's the

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: What I would start telling them at the beginning is that that member voted against the 10% discount, which is called the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit. That member voted against the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year. That member voted against the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. He voted against the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. What he has not done is he has not told his constituents that these programs exist, because he's embarrassed that he voted against them.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has repeatedly promised in this Legislature that there will be a 2014 horse racing season in Fort Erie. The racetrack has done everything asked of them. Now we're just days away from a looming deadline of April 1, when a quarterly rent cheque needs to be paid. It's time to stop the dithering.

Can the Premier ensure this Legislature today that there will be a 2014 racing season at the Fort Erie track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, there will be a 2014 season at Fort Erie. There absolutely will be. I understand there was a meeting yesterday, and I understand that there wasn't a resolution at that point, but there will be a season at Fort Erie. We are working with them. They know that we want Fort Erie to thrive. There will be a 2014 season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This isn't just happening in Fort Erie. The future of Sudbury Downs is also in doubt because they can't get a straight answer from the Liberal government either. Fort Erie officials feel as though the government has waited until the last possible minute and are now retracting the number of race days, races, purses and commissions that could keep the Fort Erie Race Track operating.

The Premier promised action to save these tracks and save the good jobs these tracks provide. Is she going to deliver or is this yet another empty Liberal promise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are delivering. In fact, Woodbine, Mohawk, Flamboro, Georgian Downs, Western Fair, Clinton, Hanover and Grand River have plans in place. At Fort Erie, there is going to be a 2014 season and that process is in place. At Sudbury, Kawartha, Dresden, Hiawatha, Leamington, Ajax and Rideau Carleton, the negotiations are happening. Those plans are under discussion. There will be seasons, there will be plans, and we have acted on our commitment.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I've heard from people in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood about the issue of violence against women and girls in the aboriginal community. Scarborough–Guildwood—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You have to identify the minister, please.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely. This question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Scarborough–Guildwood has one of the highest offreserve native populations in Ontario. We know that across Canada, the rate of violence against aboriginal women is almost triple that of non-aboriginal women and the rate of spousal homicide for aboriginal women is eight times greater than for non-aboriginal women. About 15% of aboriginal women report suffering from some form of intimate-partner violence, two and a half times greater than among non-aboriginal women. National data in Canada reveal that 75% of aboriginal girls under the age of 18 experience abuse, 50% of whom are under 14; sadly, almost 25% are younger than the age of seven.

Given the tragic reality of these statistics and the national scale of this epidemic, through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what our government is doing to address this important issue?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for asking about this very important issue. I and this government are deeply troubled by the rate of violence against aboriginal women. This violence must stop. Collaboration amongst all ministries and community partners is the key to ending the violence.

As the member rightly stated in the question, this is a national issue that requires a national strategy. I, along with my provincial and territorial counterparts from across Canada, made this clear to the federal minister at a recent meeting of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group in Winnipeg. Furthermore, as chair of the Council of the Federation in 2013, our Premier made this position clear. Ontario supports the call by the national aboriginal organizations for a national inquiry.

The federal government, however, recently tabled a special parliamentary committee report into missing or murdered aboriginal women. I am disappointed that the report did not support the call for a national public inquiry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for the work you are doing on behalf of the aboriginal community in Ontario. The people of my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood will be reassured to know that Ontario is showing leadership in our efforts to advance this important issue.

However, despite the federal government's assertion that they have already taken concrete action, it is clear that they have failed to respond to the call from national aboriginal organizations, provincial and territorial ministers, and the Council of the Federation. National aborig-

inal organizations like the Native Women's Association of Canada have expressed their continued frustration and disappointment in addressing this key issue in the aboriginal community.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you inform the House on what Ontario is doing to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls in the absence of a national strategy?

Hon. David Zimmer: The special committee's failure to respond to the action call for a national inquiry is a lost opportunity. It's a lost opportunity to demonstrate real commitment to putting an end to all forms of violence against indigenous women and girls.

My friend Michèle Audette, who is the president of the Native Women's Association, had this to say: "I was shocked, I was mad ... to see how they gave [the report] that title 'Invisible Women' it's just like we're under the carpet right now," and they are not invisible.

Mr. Speaker, these women and girls are not invisible to me. They're not invisible to this government. I can tell you that through Ontario's Joint Working Group on Violence against Aboriginal Women, I am working closely with all of the other relevant ministers, as well as many aboriginal organizations, to find ways to tackle this terrible issue. We will work to ensure a long-term strategy that includes initiatives to prevent violence, to better support victims, and we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Moments ago, the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen revealed that David Livingston, the former chief of staff to Dalton McGuinty, gave access to outsiders to wipe clean 24 hard drives. They are pursuing a criminal breach of trust charge against the former chief of staff to the Liberal government that carries a penalty of up to five years in prison, for the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal.

My question to the Premier: Can you confirm to this assembly and to the people of Ontario that one of the 24 computers was not that of yours while co-chair of the Liberal campaign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Stick a cork in it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Obviously, this is a very serious allegation. My understanding is that a couple of news outlets are reporting that a police search warrant alleges—so there's an allegation—that David Livingston committed a breach of trust for illegally wiping computers. That's all I know.

We have said all along that we would co-operate with the OPP investigation. We have done that; we will continue to do that. Obviously, this is a serious allegation, and it is exactly why we have to work with the police and answer any of their requests in complete co-operation with them. We will continue to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is clear that this government has not been completely forthcoming with members of this assembly over the \$1.1-billion cancelled gas plants.

In fact, the OPP, in the Ottawa Citizen article, are alleging that during the transition period after McGuinty had resigned from office under a cloud of allegations over the cancellation of gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, David Livingston arranged to get special computer access so that one user—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop, please. Stop the clock.

I'm going to warn the Minister of the Environment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is serious. They allowed an outsider to have access to wipe hard drives in the Premier's office during the transition period between Dalton McGuinty and the new Premier. The question I asked was very serious: Was one of them yours? Can you tell this assembly today without a question of doubt that you did not have any of your hard drives leaked or deleted?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interiections

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron–Bruce, come to order. The member from Durham, come to order.

Mr. John O'Toole: It doesn't matter—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is warned. The member from Durham, you know the next step. Not another word.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Government Services

Hon. John Milloy: This is a serious matter, and I would—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Barrie, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I would warn the honourable member, we have in this—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You should be apologizing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned. We're going to get through this without the interruptions.

Carry on

Hon. John Milloy: We have a system here where the police can investigate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge, come to order. The member from Oxford, come to order. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, come to order. One more time and you'll be named.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The police are looking into a particular situation. I think that all members of this House would agree that the best thing for members of the Legislature to do is to not speculate or comment on a police investigation and to allow the police to do their work. To stand here in this House somehow like a judge and jury and prosecutor—the fact of the matter is that we have some media reports about a police investigation. Let us allow the police to do their work.

In terms of coming forward with information, I would comment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Newspaper outlets are reporting that the OPP have alleged criminal breach of trust against McGuinty's chief of staff over email deletions in the gas plant scandal. When did the government learn of these revelations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just got a note a few minutes ago saying that these allegations had been made. We have co-operated with the Ontario Provincial Police. We will continue to co-operate with the Ontario Provincial Police. There is an investigation ongoing. That is what I know at this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We have asked before, and I will ask again: Should charges be laid, will the Premier support appointment of a special prosecutor in this case?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I appreciate the theatrics, but we have a police investigation, and I think the members understand that when the police are looking into a situation, members of this Legislature, in fact, in many instances—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Are you serious? Your former chief of staff is going to jail, and you speak about theatrics? I've never seen a more corrupt government in my life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will withdraw, and I call her to order as well.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Throughout the operation of the Legislature, there is a clear division between the work that we do and the work that law enforcement does. The fact of the matter is that we allow the police to undertake their work. We don't speculate. We don't jump to

conclusions. We don't act here like judge and jury. We allow the police to undertake their work, and I would caution all members on that side of the House that that's exactly what we should do. We should allow them to undertake their work and reach their conclusion and not try to interfere through questions in the Legislature.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of the Environment. Every year, hundreds of thousands of vehicles that were once fresh off the showroom floor with that new car scent have deteriorated to the point that they are old, obsolete and not serviceable. They become heaps, beaters, junkers. Many of these buckets of bolts shouldn't even be on the road.

However, Minister, end-of-life vehicles contain both parts that are still useful and hazardous substances that need to stay out of our environment. Although nearly 95% of all end-of-life vehicles generated in Ontario are recovered in whole or in part, there is recycling and there is recycling.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to ensure that end-oflife vehicles are properly and safely recycled?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for an excellent question. As the member stated, end-of-life vehicles contain potentially hazardous materials that must be kept out of the environment and valuable materials that can feed our industries. About 600,000 vehicles are junked each year in Ontario, and most of them are processed to recover valuable used parts and for high-value metal recycling.

We want to ensure that end-of-life vehicles are properly managed to protect the environment and human health. That is why my ministry is proposing environmental standards for end-of-life vehicles and to regulate facilities that process them through the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry. We are consulting on standards that would ensure facilities that dismantle end-of-life vehicles do so properly, including removing and safely managing petroleum liquids and hazardous materials, such as the nerve toxin mercury. The standards are now posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for public review and comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, a point of order: Once again, I seek unanimous consent that the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put forward without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading, and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance is seeking unanimous consent that the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to

amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put forward without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading, and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member from Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe-Grey is seeking unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing. Do we agree? I heard a no.

There are no further votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome students in grades 5 and 6 from Rotherglen Meadowvale elementary school in my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South. They are on their way into the Legislature. Welcome them to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker; very well done.

Every day we wake up in the safety of our well-built homes, enjoy the benefits of electricity and running water, and travel on roads built to last. Many of these services we take for granted are delivered by highly skilled, experienced and passionate tradespeople. These are the workers who ensure our daily lives run smoothly, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Over the course of the past years, the Ontario government has implemented policies linked to the College of Trades that are anything but a sign of appreciation for the work that tradespeople do. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Earl Leger, a hard-working tradesperson, was glad to see his son Devon follow in his footsteps and join the skilled trades as an apprentice. Despite an ongoing jobs glut, Devon found employment in Kingston after a lengthy job hunt. However, in less than two weeks Devon will lose his job for no other good reason than this government's job-killing policies.

The College of Trades is challenging the validity of regular trade licences and seeking an artificially high exam failure rate. Even though the employer is very happy with Devon's job performance, they will be forced to terminate him due to the new College of Trades employment-killing regulations.

Speaker, Ontario tradespeople have always been honest, law-abiding workers committed to the highest standards of safety, ethics and service. The College of Trades, by driving tradespeople out of business, is about to deprive us of the very foundation of our daily comfort and this province's success.

It isn't the tradespeople and apprentices that have to go; it's the College of Trades and this government.

HEALTH CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a story today that speaks of two very different realities of life in my riding of Hamilton Mountain: a story of a system and a government that fail the people of this province, and a story of how our community can sometimes overcome those obstacles that come before us.

There's a resident on the mountain who suffers from a neuromuscular disease that has progressively affected his mobility, his speech and a portion of his brain that controls muscle movement. Due to this, he was forced to quit work in 1994 and has steadily gotten worse since then. Most recently he suffered a small stroke and has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which has confined him to his bedroom. He receives assistance from a PSW and his wife 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For a medical appointment, they have to rent a wheelchair and a metal ramp to get him out of the house. The ramp requires two very strong people to wheel my constituent down the ramp safely. It's totally unsuited to their needs, but they have been denied funding for a more permanent ramp.

Fortunately, Carpenters Local 18 came to the rescue after hearing from Councillor Scott Duvall and another resident, Chris Ecklund. The carpenters will assist with building and installing a ramp, taking a huge burden off this family.

This is the not the first family our community has rallied to help, and I know it will not be the last. Thank you to all involved for stepping up to the plate to take care of one of our own.

HEATHER ROBERTSON

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I stand in the House today to honour Heather Robertson, a renowned author from King township in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham who passed away on March 19, 2014.

Throughout her celebrated career, Ms. Robertson received many awards for her work as both a fiction and non-fiction writer. Her first book, Willie: A Romance, won the Books in Canada Best First Novel Award in 1983. However, my personal favourite was her last book,

Walking into Wilderness, which is an illustrated journey that traces the history of the land and water trails between Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay. In fact, in 2013, it received the inaugural Ontario Speaker of the Legislative Assembly award.

Ms. Robertson's legacy reaches beyond her work as an author. She was seen by many as a beloved mentor. She was also a founding member of both the Writers' Union of Canada and the Periodical Writers' Association of Canada. Moreover, she was instrumental in ensuring that freelance copyright laws extend to electronic publication. Furthermore, Ms. Robertson served her community as president of the King Township Historical Society and as a member of the York Pioneer and Historical Society.

Heather Robertson's passing is a great loss for her family, her friends and her community. To the rest of us, she was a wonderful example of a life well lived.

ORANGEVILLE LIONS CLUB

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Orangeville Lions Club, who are marking their 65th anniversary this year. This organization continues to make significant contributions to key projects that benefit the well-being of all residents in our community.

When it was chartered in April 1949, Lions Club members acted as our community's first crossing guards, ensuring students had a safer walk to school. Since that time, Lions' activities and projects have been instrumental in enhancing our quality of life. Whether it was providing the initial donation to build a new arena, constructing a pool, sponsoring sports teams or supporting our local hospital, schools and library—and, of course, their annual home show, happening April 4 to 6—the involvement of the Orangeville Lions Club members has ensured we live in a strong and vibrant community. I applaud every Lions Club member for their numerous contributions and their incredible commitment.

In the history of the Lions Club in Orangeville, there have been very few community projects that have not had a helping hand from a Lions Club member. Whenever a Lions Club gets together, problems get smaller and communities get better.

On behalf of all Dufferin-Caledon residents and the Ontario Legislature, I'd like to wish the Orangeville Lions Club congratulations.

BEACHES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mr. Michael Prue: Yesterday in the news, and today in this morning's newspapers, much was made about the fact that the jazz festival in the Beach was about to get some of its money reinstated. Unfortunately, I wish that were true. It is not.

Mr. Chilelli and his team met with ministry officials yesterday. No promises were made to reinstate the funding. In fact, the ministry staff was unable to explain why the festival did not fall into the parameters of having more tourism here in Toronto.

The government today is speaking about a separate fund that is called the OMD. But, to paraphrase Mr. Chilelli, and I think he said it best, receipt of this grant has nothing to do with the issue at hand, the issue being the festival's non-receipt of funding through Celebrate Ontario.

It now appears to festival organizers and its supporters that the government has no intention of reinstating funding at whatever level for the festival for its 2014 season, and the issue remains outstanding.

We believe that what is good enough for paid performances, like those by Drake or by Maple Leaf sports or by anyone else who charges a lot of money for a ticket, should be good enough for a large, free, inclusive institution like the jazz festival in the Beach. This is not good enough to take it out of another pocket, because they had already been given that money. This is what this government is trying to do, and it needs to be exposed. This is not fair to the people of the Beach, and we do not accept what is written in the paper today.

HOLI FESTIVAL

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Last Sunday, I had the opportunity of attending the Holi celebration in my community of Mississauga—Brampton South. This Holi dinner-and-dance fundraising event was hosted by the Mississauga Churchill Meadows Lions Club.

Holi is the festival of colours—the colours of unity—and an opportunity to forget all differences and reaffirm universal brotherhood. Holi reminds us all that the winter is over and that spring is around the corner. It is about new beginnings, hope and optimism. It is also a time to catch up with family and friends.

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As we all know, Lions International is the world's largest service organization. Its members believe in the common good and serving others in need. I thank the president of the Mississauga's Churchill Meadow Lions Club, Pammi Walia; vice-president Rimple Thakkar; secretary Neena Sehgal and all of its members for their hard work and dedication towards improving the lot of humanity. Kudos to Mississauga Churchill Meadows Lions Club.

BURLINGTON EAGLES

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I've had the pleasure of speaking on more than one occasion at the Golden Horseshoe Hockey Tournament, hosted by the Burlington Eagles, Burlington's rep hockey club.

Thanks to outstanding performances from their squads in the past week, the Eagles achieved the historic feat of winning Ontario minor hockey championships across the hoard

The atom AAA Eagles, under coach Jim Haslett, defeated Whitby to take the gold.

The atom AA Eagles, under coach Cam Cooke, trumped Markham to win their championship series.

The atom A Eagles, coached by Brian Sharpe, swept Orillia in three games.

The city's other atom team, the AE 1 Eagles, edged New Tecumseth to win their series.

The bantam AA Eagles took home an OMHA championship of their own after knocking out Belleville.

The peewee AE 1 Eagles, under coach Chris Chard, swept a six-point series against Stoney Creek.

These players have distinguished themselves both on and off the ice. The Eagles, along with community partners, collected more than 38 tonnes of food in the 2013 Gift of Giving Back Community Food Drive, with proceeds going to Carpenter Hospice, Halton Women's Place, Partnership West and the Salvation Army.

Congratulations to all, Speaker.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise today to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of Canada's first subway line, the Yonge-University-Spadina line, which first opened for service on March 30, 1954.

At the time, we were leaders in building transit. The Yonge-University-Spadina line is the busiest subway line in Canada and the second-busiest in North America. It exists because past governments made investments that were needed at the time.

Not only have the city limits grown, but the population of Toronto has increased from one million to 2.5 million people, and the population continues to grow. However, our subway system has not adapted with the population influx. The previous government cut transit funding, filled in proposed subway lines and terminated subway lines without taking into account the growth of the city.

Our government has taken bold action by investing in the Scarborough subway and beginning construction on the Eglinton Crosstown, currently the largest infrastructure project under way in Canada, as well as the Union-Pearson express line, set to open in less than one year.

This government has shown leadership after decades of neglect in transit and infrastructure investment. We have recognized the need to find a more affordable and accessible way to get people around the GTA from work to home to play, and we are working to help Ontarians in their everyday lives. This is good for our economy as well as our environment.

FRANK STAPLETON

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to stand today and congratulate one of my constituents, Frank Stapleton, on receiving the Lieutenant Governor's lifetime achievement award for the conservation of Ontario's heritage. Frank is one of just 18 Ontario volunteers to receive this honour for the year 2013.

He was nominated by the municipality of Clarington, where he had served as a councillor at one time. As a

volunteer in support of local heritage, Frank contributed historic photographs and articles to many publications. These include a book commemorating the 150th anniversary of Newtonville Community Hall.

Frank has served as a Doors Open volunteer and organizer of walking tours in Clarington. He volunteers on many community boards and frequently serves as an auctioneer at fundraisers in support of local heritage projects.

Frank Stapleton is a fifth-generation resident of Newtonville, a village within Clarington. He is also well known in our community as a world-champion auctioneer, the proprietor of Stapleton Auctions, and a former municipal councillor, as I said.

Thank you to Frank and his family for all of their support of our community and of heritage generally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: My petition is from the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65" and over "to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs" or other savings, and perhaps sell their homes to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and give it to Justin, one of the pages.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, blease.

I beg to tell the members that I missed something that I needed to cover off before petitions. Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I normally like to do these without interruption—concerning the high price of electricity. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

My apologies. Further petitions?

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands;

"Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike:

"Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

"Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors."

I'll sign this, and I'm going to give it to Caroline.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

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"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures," as do I.

I'm sending it to you via page Mustfah.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for improved post-stroke physiotherapy eligibility.

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded additional physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory"—very discriminatory—"nature of current treatment practices."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to sign it, and I'm going to pass it to my page, Milana.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1:

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, and I give my petition to Calvin.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

As I am in agreement, I affix my signature, and give it to page Anthony.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Because the York-Simcoe one was so good, I'm going to add to it.

A petition to repeal Ontario's breed-specific legislation:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and "Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

For the 1,000 or so dogs that have already lost their lives because of the way they look, I'm going to sign my name and give it to Divya to be delivered to the table.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: "A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures," as do I, and send it to you via page Zohaib.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; "Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

As I am in agreement, I affix my signature and give it to page Nick.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families:

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province:

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in northwestern Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and give it to page Jonah to deliver.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: "A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies; "Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

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"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

"In agreement thereof, we affix our signatures," as do I, sending it to you via page Mustfah.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

This petition is signed by Lynda Flintoff and Mary-Anne Keith, just a few of the constituents who signed the petition. I sign it and give it to Jane, one of the pages.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Bisson assumes ballot item 1 and Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 32.

Orders of the day.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately move to reward job creators with a tax credit for new hires to alleviate the jobs crisis. Such a tax credit should include a reimbursement to employers for 10% of the salary paid to a new hire during the first year of employment, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per new hire, and be conditional upon businesses demonstrating that a new hire is genuine and provides on-the-job training.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm glad we have this opportunity today to pass a motion that will help create jobs in our province. This motion will reward job creators with a tax credit for every job they create. A job creation tax credit will help small businesses and companies that are investing in our communities and creating jobs here in Ontario, not ones shipping our jobs overseas.

Too many people are losing hope of finding a job. Instead of offering change, this government insists the same old plan is working. We can do better. We must do better

Ontario currently spends more than \$2 billion each year on an ad hoc mix of overlapping business support programs that are a hodgepodge of fragmented programs with unnecessary costs. That is according to the Drummond Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services.

Speaker, these programs are currently scattered across eight ministries and include no-strings-attached give-aways in the form of grants, loans, guarantees and tax breaks with little or no link to jobs.

Consolidating business support programs into a single fund will save \$250 million annually by reducing duplication and cutting administration costs by 25%, according to the government. The government has appointed three panels, conducted its own review and promised repeatedly in the last two years to consolidate business supports and reduce administration, but it failed.

The job creator tax credit motion I propose, that the NDP proposes, calls for action now to stop the waste and invest the \$250 million in annual savings that can be achieved by consolidating business support into a two-year job creation tax credit. The tax credit will support new jobs, not the replacement of previous employees. We will cap the amount an individual employer can claim at \$100,000 a year, creating a fair playing field so that many companies of all sizes will have access to the fund.

Our plan will increase the number of jobs available to everyone: men, women, new Canadians or young people—anyone who needs work. It would reimburse employers for 10% of the salary paid to new hires during their first year of employment, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per new hire. Businesses would have to demonstrate that the new hire is genuine, and they would have to provide on-the-job training.

People in Ontario are facing a jobs crisis. We need to take action now. This is one simple, practical step we can take now to get people working: Create a job, get a tax credit.

I represent the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the surrounding communities. I know this plan will work in the Niagara region, where people are facing the highest unemployment in the province. We all know what's not working, and that's corporate tax cuts, which last year gave corporations \$770 million yet didn't create one job.

I'm asking this government to listen to the Niagara businesses. Speaker, as you know, I was just elected in the Niagara Falls riding on February 13 of this year. As MPP for the riding of Niagara Falls, which includes Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and a number of other communities, I spoke with thousands of residents, and their number one concern was jobs—jobs for themselves, jobs for their kids and jobs for their grandkids.

In Niagara, during the by-election, I met with a number of employees from a lot of different sectors of the economy: tourism, wineries, manufacturing, print shops and many, many others. Every employer—not me—said they support a job tax credit for new hires, training and investing. We spoke with Paul Harber of the Ravine Vineyard in Niagara-on-the-Lake, who supported the job creation tax credit. He said the planned NDP job tax credit will help his business create local jobs and expand his business.

In Fort Erie, we have an opportunity to save 1,000 jobs—700 direct, 300 indirect—by supporting a long-term commitment to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open. That includes supporting this year's Year of the Horse Festival meet.

This targeted tax credit is needed in Fort Erie, as one of the heart-wrenching things during my campaign was to see what was going on in Fort Erie. Not just stores were closed, but entire plazas were shut down, a number of homes were up for sale and young people were looking to move away. Workers and young people in Fort Erie need an opportunity to work and live and raise

their families in Fort Erie, and this tax credit can help put them back to work.

We spoke to a number of tourism operators and hotel owners who supported a targeted tax credit that rewards job creators. This is another voice of small business that would help put people back to work.

We met with and spoke to a number of printing shop owners who were clear that the corporate tax cuts didn't create one job and didn't help their business. They say a targeted tax credit would help them hire more employees, and, again, put residents in Niagara back to work.

I met with manufacturers like SpencerARL, which is a real success story in Niagara, a company that started with 11 employees that decided to work with the city of Niagara Falls, the city council, the union, and the highly skilled workers in Niagara. Now they have grown to 280 employees.

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The CEO of ARL, Nebe Tamburro, has been clear that with a targeted tax credit, they would have been able to hire more people faster, train them sooner, and invest in more equipment. Nebe said his company needs leaders like everybody in this room, like all of us here today, to come together to protect and create local jobs and economic opportunities in the Niagara region and in the province. Nebe said that small business needs us to stand up for them. The job creator tax credit motion is the way to do that.

These examples from the by-election in the riding of Niagara Falls should show this government that this plan works for Niagara, which has the highest unemployment rate in Ontario. I want to say that it's not Wayne Gates and the NDP saying this. This is business after business after business that supports a targeted tax credit to create jobs.

Here are quotes from businesses across the province in support of a job creator tax credit:

Stephen Lake, CEO for Thalmic Labs, a venture-capital-backed technology company based in Kitchener: "Talent acquisition is a huge priority for Thalmic Labs at our stage of growth. An incentive like the one being proposed would be helpful for companies like us as we continue to build out our teams."

Sean Moore, CEO of Unconquered Sun Solar Technologies, a manufacturer of premium solar panels in Windsor, says this: "The NDP plan for a new job creation tax credit is a smart, simple idea that will help me grow Unconquered Sun Solar Tech. I would love to see such a policy put in place to help spur job creation across the province."

Vivianne Dupuis of Sutherland's Furniture, which operates a 25,000-square-foot facility in London: "The plan for a jobs creation tax credit is exactly the sort of policy that will help me grow my business. This plan will assist small businesses in growing their operation and, in turn, growing the local economy. It's great to hear Andrea talking about such a sensible plan. I hope it becomes a reality."

Economist Jim Stanford says, "The concept of delivering tax support to businesses, of any size, which deliver incremental gains on performance measures like capital spending or employment creation is economically sound, and could play an important role in stimulating new growth....

"Targeted performance-based tax credits are far preferable to across-the-board reductions in corporate income taxes, which transfer vast resources to businesses whether they expand their economic activity or not."

Ontario has lost too many jobs. Where I come from, hard-working parents are facing the highest unemployment rate in the province. It's breaking their hearts to see their families separated by watching their kids move away to find work. People, young people, need jobs. The status quo isn't working. Corporate tax cuts are not working for the province of Ontario. We need fresh thinking. We need a practical way to help companies reinvest in Ontario.

Our workforce is one of the most skilled in the world—highest productivity, highest-quality health and safety. It doesn't matter what you talk about when it comes to skilled workers in the province of Ontario; you have them in every community in Ontario, whether it be in Niagara, whether it be in Barrie, whether it be in Windsor or whether it be in Kitchener. They are highly skilled, and what they want to do is go back to work and perform jobs and raise their families and buy homes, and enjoy them growing up in their home communities with their families.

This gives us an opportunity to put people back to work, so let's put people back to work. Let's give young people a fair shot at getting a job. It's time to take action. Businesses after businesses after businesses support the plan. They say that they will invest in job creation in Niagara; they'll invest in all the other communities right across the province.

It's time to take action. It's time to bring forward a job creation tax credit and put people back to work. It's a simple process: If you hire somebody, you get a targeted tax credit. Let's put Ontarians back to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind all members of the House—I let this member go because he's new—we do not refer to people by their first name or last name but by the title of their riding.

Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: As a courtesy, I would have expected perhaps that the Liberals, the governing party, would have actually stood up and paid some respect to the remarks made from the member from Niagara Falls, Mr. Gates. However, the fact that no one stood—I did listen to his remarks.

First of all, I commend him on his first private member's bill. He came across during the election recently as very passionate and very supportive of union and union members in his riding, and I commend him for that. I think his intentions here are well intended as well, al-

though I would disagree with the strategy completely and unquestionably.

I guess if you look at the real issue here, and Mr. Gates would probably know this—the member from Niagara Falls—in 1994, when I was a regional councillor in Durham and having worked 30 years in manufacturing myself, the then-government of Bob Rae—I've never really understood if Bob Rae was NDP or Liberal or both or neither one of the above. I say this with all respect to a former Premier of Ontario: They had a failed plan, not unlike this plan, honestly. I forget what that plan was called, but I think it was an outright grant for creating a job.

That economic time is very similar to today because if you measure, we're looking at youth unemployment as being, depending on what age group, in the 20% range, technically, if you get down low enough. Once they get to 22, they've got, potentially, a university or college degree and are perhaps more employable. But for the hard to employ, it's an issue. That's the genesis of this idea. I'm not sure that it's a very good plan technically. It didn't work then, and it won't work now.

I think if you look at some of the things that would help—here's the false argument of this, with all due respect. This is important. You always flaunt around these terms, "the big, greedy corporate tax rate." That's actually a false argument, because corporations only pay tax if they make money.

Right now, the government's reason for this deficit issue is that corporations are in big trouble. Almost all of them are, basically. Most of them are in consolidation. In fact, Kellogg's, Heinz and Caterpillar have left Canada—Ontario specifically—but we're still buying their soup and their tractors and their other products. But they're being made somewhere else, because they have a more competitive environment. Now, I'm not just trying to say it's trickle-down or any of that kind of simplistic stuff. The climate for investment here is wrong. Look at Research In Motion. Look at Nortel. Look at the auto sector itself. We have a significant problem here.

I'm going to put a couple of ideas on the table for the member for Niagara Falls, and these would be in a plan that our party and Tim Hudak has put forward. Let's listen. Let's not get hung up on ideology. This is private members' business. I'll just give you one example: To become more competitive isn't just cutting wages; it's cutting inefficiency. With inefficiency, a good way to do it is to modernize and capitalize industry.

I worked at General Motors as part of that team of people that looked across what they called a diagonal slice of the organization. Yes, we took out managers. But what we did was automate a lot of the work that was redundant, repetitive and often caused repetitive strain injuries and stuff like that. We automated almost all of that heavy lifting which caused high WSIB rates.

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What we propose is this: Allow industry and manufacturing to become innovative and increase the capital tax allowance. That is where they get to write off immediately their investments in capitalization, which in itself creates jobs for those people who create that software, the hardware, the equipment and potentially the training, in another setting, so that they can modernize the manufacturing environment. That's one idea.

The current government's tax on trades is a problem. If you could show me a value-added component to that, I would probably agree with it. What I would do, though, is this: I would give training allowances to companies that are in-house, on-hand, real experience for skilledtrades youth. Creating co-op opportunities that have a paid component to it through tax relief is the proper way

Technically, these are all ideas that we have put on the table, and I think they're workable ideas. I've seen them in my 30 years of industry, running a department with

300 or 400 people in it.

Another one would be affordable electricity. We're paying other jurisdictions now to take our energy, because when the wind is blowing at night, our FIT contracts by this government, that hasn't got a clue, requires them to actually buy the energy. When we're buying the energy, we're getting energy off the grid by giving them to New York or Quebec-giving it to them. But we still have to pay for it, because you're still paying for that water tax, or the plant to create the energy. So we're losing it. We're paying for the production of it, but we're giving it away for free. We could actually use that energy more affordably here.

I think the simple solution is this: Create a climate that creates jobs. Do not think that government, either this one or that one, can create security and confidence of investment. If you trade some of your thoughts into looking and creating a climate for investment, you will achieve the goal. Governments can't run businesses. Look at what they're doing now in Ontario. They're scaring them away. They're not creating them.

Our last and easiest one is to ease up on the regulations—not soften them up. Make them workable, and not have duplication and waste.

I wish I had another hour. I commend the member for bringing it forward, and I wait to hear other comments in the discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As always, it is an honour to stand in this place. I want to start off by commending and thanking our new member from Niagara Falls, Wayne Gates, who has, on his first opportunity, introduced his first motion, the job creator tax credit, which as New Democrats-

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Of course.

He was the jobs champion during the by-election in Niagara Falls, and he has certainly continued with that focus as an elected member in this House. I want to thank him and congratulate him.

New Democrats have spoken at length about our concept and our ideas to consolidate the tax regime in this

province and, essentially, to reform the tax code. That's what we're talking about today: to streamline and make more effective our use of tax dollars and tax incentives.

It's not strictly born out of our party. This comes from consultation with members of our community, folks in small and medium-sized businesses, those who we speak about each and every day as a priority in this House, who we know are facing enormous challenges. Whether they be global or regional in their design, we know it's tough out there for certain segments of business in the province of Ontario.

In identifying those challenges, we make the correlation to how we operate in this House, and what programs, what benefits we can offer and what type of effort we can put forward—to steal a line from the member of Durham—to make the climate a little bit better.

It is responsive to those inquiries. It is responsive to the demands from business for us to be more effective in our delivery. It's also responsive, maybe most importantly, to our constituents, to those taxpayers who are asking, begging, pleading for more transparency, more accountability and goals to be achieved through our efforts here. That's what this does. It sets quite a simple goal: If you create a job, you get a tax credit.

It perplexes me that the Liberal government can't understand that concept—potentially because they've defended and stuck to the status quo for so long in terms of broad-based corporate tax reductions, or sticking to unaccountable programs of tax relief when businesses take customers out for fancy dinners or buy box seats to the Toronto Maple Leafs to entice them. I don't know if that would be enticing these days, because the Toronto Maple Leafs certainly haven't had that stellar of a record, but nevertheless it is something that the average person out there doesn't understand—doesn't see the correlation.

What we're saying, as New Democrats—thankfully, through the good words of my friend from Niagara Falls—is that we're putting forward an intelligent, practical, balanced plan, one that has metrics attached to it

that people want to see.

I listened intently to the member from Durham, who I believe was critical of this plan, referencing that it had been applied before without great effect. I don't know what exactly that was, but I can only surmise that the official opposition is in support of the current government's initiative on taxes, because they haven't proposed any reforms specifically on support for small businesses through any tax reforms. They've got time left on the clock; I would like to hear specifically why they're critical of a tax support mechanism that would reward job creators.

The criticism that I've heard from the Liberal government is simply that these businesses would have hired people anyway. Well, that's not true. If it were, what would they be waiting for? We would have seen massive employment. What we do know is that the tax regime that has currently been happening, that we currently live under, is low compared to other neighbouring jurisdictions, whether they be provinces or states.

We know that the result of that has not equalled massive employment. We know it has resulted in hoarding of cash reserves by corporations. Again, don't take my word for it, Speaker; take that of the former finance minister of the federal government, Jim Flaherty, who was very critical of businesses who were hoarding massive amounts of cash—in excess of \$600 billion—in the country. They are not spending those tax dollars that we have given them to incentivize growth and employment.

We see that. We listened to former Minister Flaherty. We listened to the former Bank of Canada governor—

Interjection: Carney.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —Mark Carney. Thank you very much to my very, very attentive colleagues. Mark Carney said similar things: that this is a serious problem, and that if we are to stimulate or partner with business, we should have some metrics attached. What we all need to see are tangible jobs created in our communities.

It's one that is a point of frustration for many of the people in our communities when they see our tax dollars being given out in the form of grants, direct subsidies or just a direct cut to the tax rate—similar to companies like Navistar, who received direct subsidies to the tune of \$35 million and promptly left the community of Chatham-Kent, laying off, letting go or firing over 1,100 workers.

That can't happen anymore. If we are to be accountable, transparent and truthful with our efforts here in terms of tax relief, we should have some strings attached. That's what we're calling for. It's something that I think there is certainly an appetite, a desire, on behalf of Ontarians to see: that we take those initiatives.

This is simply one mechanism for the government to adopt. I cannot understand how they are so reluctant to implement such a common-sense type of program. It would, I think, give them a little bit more credibility than they have had on the file for so long.

Businesses in Ontario are ready to invest. I speak with them. We all speak with them each and every day. They are ready to invest in enhanced manufacturing. They are ready to invest in enhanced manufacturing. They are ready to invest in research and development.

I'm meeting with a really special business owner tomorrow who is really bringing something that could potentially be revolutionary to our health industry, and I'm supportive of those initiatives. The focus from that business owner: Because she understands that good jobs in her community have a multiplier effect and provide a triple net benefit, she wants to hire, and produce and manufacture goods, in Ontario, in her community. That is her priority. We should be there, as a government, to identify those types of corporations, those types of companies, and assist them directly and make it a priority. This is what it calls for.

It's common sense. It's balanced, it's targeted and it adds value to our tax regime. Speaker, I can't understand why anyone in this House would be critical of it and not want to adopt it as soon as possible. But I have been amazed before at the reluctance of this House to adopt

commonsensical practices. I'll leave it at that and leave some time on the clock for my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, this motion, although well intended, will not serve Ontario's unemployment problem. First, the 10% salary subsidy would be gratefully accepted by employers who were going to create the new jobs even without the subsidy. Most new jobs would most likely be created by employers because their business plan requires more employees to do more work or new work at their growing businesses. In this case, new jobs would not be created because of the salary subsidy, and therefore the subsidy would effectively be wasted money.

Secondly, in the case where the 10% salary subsidy causes a new job to be created and the subsidy ends after one year, there is a high risk that many of these very tenuous jobs will end when the subsidy ends. Again, the subsidy will effectively be wasted money.

What this motion calls for is corporate welfare. Neither government nor private sector businesses should be in the business of corporate welfare. Corporate success, including job creation, can only occur where there is a successful business plan that will create profits and jobs. The best way for government to help the private sector create jobs is to reduce red tape, reduce energy prices and provide a competitive rate of taxation. In other words, government should get out of the way.

The Green Energy Act is unnecessarily driving up electricity costs. This is impoverishing poor and middle-class people, which means they have less money to spend on consumer goods. That results in companies reducing the production of goods, leading to fewer employees and more unemployment. It is a vicious cycle of failure.

There are 385,000 regulations in Ontario. This mountain of red tape, forms, applications, fees and wasted time creates big increases in administrative costs, which stifles business and kills jobs—more unemployment. Again, it is a vicious cycle of failure.

The huge government debt of \$270 billion, with a deficit of \$10 billion and an interest charge on the debt of \$10 billion per year, is bleeding taxpayers dry with increased taxes that are needed to carry this crushing, job-killing burden of debt. The government needs to get its financial house in order to demonstrate to potential job-creating businesses that the government understands that only when government reduces the size and cost of government and passes on the savings to businesses and taxpayers will businesses be incentivized to invest in Ontario and create jobs. Until then, we will continue to bathe in the glow of financial chaos and wallow in a cesspool of high unemployment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, it is such a pleasure for me to stand in this House in support of my new colleague's motion before the House. Certainly he is a jobs champion. He has worked in his community for

many years to inspire investment. We actually toured a company when we were there for the by-election, in support of him, where the support, financial—and the collaboration and relationship-building that he has a strong record for in Niagara Falls proved to be very effective.

I think we're speaking from that position, and the job creator tax credit has proven to be, in other jurisdictions, incredibly powerful and successful in incentivizing investment. Just this past Monday, I was knocking on some doors of businesses in Kitchener Centre and talking to those jobs champions in our communities who have started their business. One was a fair trade clothing company; another was a young entrepreneur who started a flower shop, and we talked openly and honestly about the conditions of this job creator tax credit.

It's so simple. It does warrant a great concern that the government is not willing to look at it at all. We are not surprised that the Conservatives are not looking at it. For some reason, they're not in favour of an accountable tax credit, which has proven to be successful, which will create jobs and which will hold some accountability for tax dollars as you invest them in businesses. They're completely off script, and I'm not quite sure where they are these days.

In Kitchener, when I was talking to this young entrepreneur—she's in her first year of business—I talked to her about the terms and conditions of this job creator tax credit. I asked her, "What difference will this make for you in your business?" She said, "Quite honestly, this would allow me to hire somebody. This would increase my productivity. I could use them for marketing. I could do greater outreach in the community. It would make a tangible difference to me as a small business owner."

You know what? Small businesses and medium-sized businesses in the province of Ontario are looking for help. They are hungry for change, and they are looking for creative options, and they are looking for a partnership with the government. Right now, they do not see this government as a partner. They see them as an enemy, because the burden of taxation is so high, because the red tape is so high, because jumping through hoop after hoop after hoop just to get your business up and running in the province of Ontario is oppressive. They want some relief, and this tax credit provides them some relief. You create a job; you get a tax credit. We have dumbed it down. It is simple. Anybody can use it.

What we don't understand is why, in the spirit of a minority government, in the spirit of collaboration and co-operation, this Liberal government stands against this creative and progressive idea in their own ideology because they didn't come up with it, and we don't understand this, because they have taken so many of our other ideas. Why not a job creator tax credit to benefit the people of this province?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is, as I always like to begin by saying, a very real pleasure for me to have the opportunity to stand in

my place today, as someone who is very proud to represent the wonderful community of Vaughan in this Legislature, to speak to this particular item.

Because I believe this is the first attempt of the new member, relatively speaking, from Niagara Falls at introducing something of this nature through this process, I do want to congratulate him for taking the opportunity. I am also a new member, relatively speaking, in this chamber, having joined on the same day as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who spoke just a second ago.

I did have the chance to hear most of the discussion or most of the debate that has taken place prior to my having the chance to stand up. I did want to say in particular to the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, who spoke only a moment ago about her experience in her community, in terms of talking to business owners, small business owners etc. and others who are seeking assistance, seeking support from, I would trust, all levels of government, not merely the provincial government, with respect to creating increasingly opportunistic conditions for them to be able to continue to invest in their business—I will say, I'm not surprised to hear that people who demonstrate that degree of entrepreneurial spirit would be looking for assistance.

But I think we have to draw a very careful distinction around whether or not government should be supporting small business and all business—and absolutely, government should be. I think, over the last decade, we have demonstrated very clearly on this side of the House that that is something that's fundamental to our government's DNA and how we want to continue to move the province forward.

But I think we have to be very careful that for those who are contributing or investing their time, their energy, their resources, their enthusiasm, their entrepreneurial spirit, taking those risks—I think we have to be really careful, even when we have the best of intentions, and I will make the presumption that the new member from Niagara Falls has the best of intentions in bringing this item forward, to not inadvertently advocate for a mechanism or a device or a proposal that would actually be counterproductive.

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My fear with respect to this exact idea, this exact proposal, given that it has been used in other jurisdictions and has not been successful in other jurisdictions with respect to the exact intent that it was designed to have at the very beginning of the process in those jurisdictions, is that it would, in fact, inadvertently hurt the provincial economy; it would, in fact, not give those small business owners—because, of course, small business owners medium-sized business owners and large business owners are part of the broader fabric of our community, of our society—that it ultimately would not provide the relief or the support, unfortunately, that the author of this particular motion and other members from his caucus are suggesting that it would.

It doesn't mean that, conceptually speaking, the idea of providing support to those who have that entrepreneur-

ial spirit and who take those risks is not something that we should endeavour to do. It is, in fact, something we should do. I think the record will demonstrate very clearly over the last number of years that our government has taken that responsibility very seriously when it comes to making sure we provide the kinds of supports that will actually produce those meaningful, positive results.

I can think of one example: Just by cutting the Employer Health Tax recently, we've helped 60,000 small businesses across the province of Ontario. There are a number of other things that have taken place in this last decade, since 2003, that also provide meaningful support, that actually put business owners and entrepreneurs in a position where they can feel more confident about moving forward and hiring additional employees.

Speaker, I mentioned a second ago that this is a device that has been attempted in other jurisdictions. From what I've seen, from the analysis I've had the chance to do, I don't think that it has necessarily proved to be successful. Again, there is that gulf between the idea, the notion, the ambition of a proposal like this and exactly what the results that it produces are.

I think it's important for us to take a look at what other people who have seen this work, or who have seen this attempt to work, in their jurisdictions have had to say about this.

For example, in January 2010, a gentleman named Dean Baker, an economist, in Time magazine had this to say about a similar proposal, a similar idea: "Basically, you are paying companies to hire workers that would have been hired even if you hadn't handed out tax breaks."

From the Jobs and Prosperity Council report of 2012, and I'll quote again—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just give them a corporate tax credit. That will do it.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: "It appears that the tax credit could be used to pay for jobs that would have been created without the credit...."

I couldn't help but overhear that the member from Trinity-Spadina brought up a completely superfluous comparison a second ago here in this House. I think it's unfortunate that repeatedly, in this Legislature and outside this Legislature, we see members of the NDP caucus trying to muddy the waters and trying to build up aspirations and help build up the hopes of people in a very crass political way.

Interjection.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I would actually encourage the relatively new member from Niagara Falls to follow the lead of his seatmate or his colleague, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who from time to time actually demonstrates that this is not supposed to be about crass politics alone, and to ignore the example and the advice of the member from Trinity–Spadina and some of the other battle-hardened members of that particular caucus.

What is most important to recognize in this entire discussion is that the Ontario Liberal government has a very clear plan for making sure the economy continues to move forward. We talked about it in last year's fall eco-

nomic statement. We talked about it in last year's provincial budget. It's a plan that is about investing in people. It's a plan that is about investing in modern infrastructure. And it's a plan about making sure that we do what we can as a government to make sure that our business climate is both innovative and productive and that it's working.

The good news about the plan is that it is working. It's producing positive results for the people of Ontario, be they small, medium, or large business owners or be they the employees that those businesses seek to hire or eventually will hire or, generally speaking, actually the economy itself.

I want to say to the member: Congratulations for bringing this forward. I do accept that it was done under the best of intentions, but it is deeply flawed and does not deserve the support of this chamber.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think this is very insightful into some of the challenges our friends in the third party have in understanding the economy.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Do you want to have a serious conversation, or do you know it all?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the minister to speak through the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The serious conversation is this: What is the problem? The biggest problem, as my friend from Vaughan pointed out, is a fundamental disagreement about what the nature of the challenge is.

The economy has shifted in the last 20 years from an economy in which production was the largest generator of wealth. The manufacturing sector, in the 1970s and 1980s and into the early 1990s, generated most of the employment. Production was the single most important activity in the economy that generated wealth.

In the 1980s, that started to change. I think we gave the example, which was Pittsburgh, of what we saw in Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You told this story yesterday. Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes.

So we've seen a shift. You see, in Pittsburgh, 300 people doing the job of 243,000, and producing more steel. Our challenge is a highly automated manufacturing sector that produces fewer jobs. More cars are being made, and fewer people are making them; more robotics, more capital-intensive, a more industrial-intensive economy.

In the recession of 2008-09, which we're just now coming out of, what is interesting is that 81% of the job losses were people who had high school or less. In fact, people with a trade or certificate, or a college or university degree, increased their employment in that global recession by about 20%.

The assumption of this position taken by the third party is that the problem of underemployment or unemployment is that there are not enough jobs, and the solution is that you have to subsidize employers to create more jobs. The way you do that is you give them a tax write-off every time they hire someone. The problem is that the assumption is wrong and the solution is wrong.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—not our government; nothing to do with the province—are now projecting 1.3 million skilled jobs in Ontario by 2016. That's in 24 months. So you're going to have about 700,000 or 800,000 skilled jobs become available in Ontario. What is our government's view of the problem? That those jobs are not going to be created? No. Those jobs are being created, and the private sector is telling us that. As a matter of fact, the federal government, which is a Conservative government—Industry Canada—has put out those same numbers.

The official opposition talks about creating a million jobs. They're not going to create a million jobs; a million jobs are being created in the next three or four years no matter who is in government or what happens. The private sector is doing that; that's the private sector's job.

So what is the government's job? What is our view of the challenges? I say this sincerely, because I think that if we come to an understanding between our two parties, we can solve these problems. We added 160,000 positions to our colleges and universities. We created the College of Trades to take us from 17,000 people entering the trades to 30,000. We expanded the education system, added early childhood education and increased spending on infrastructure from \$1.4 billion to \$14 billion. All the economists are telling us that the problem is that jobs are being created—as Tom Zizys says, we have a problem of jobs without people and people without jobs.

So we believe that this—which is somewhere between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion, if it was a successful program—would actually not solve the problem, because it doesn't make anyone more skilled; it takes none of those workers. What you'll be doing at best, if you have the American experience, is take about 92% of the jobs—80% to 90% of the jobs are going to be created anyway. So you're creating something that revenue experts call freeloading. You have a tax incentive that is not actually producing an outcome. You're using tax dollars, or wasting them, to subsidize an activity that's going to happen anyway.

So I think we should probably decide what the problem is. Our challenge is: How do we fill those 800,000 new jobs when 80% of them require university and college education and about 20% of them require a skilled trade?

We think that money should be continued into infrastructure—maintain the expenditure—put it into training, expand programs like the Second Career program and try to add more university, college and trades.

I have a great deal of respect for my friend from Essex. I think he will tell you that there are a lot of shortages in the skilled trades right now. We have shortages in agriculture. The new food economy requires higher skills.

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We respect the intention of what the third party is doing. Our economic analysis of the problem is different, and our solution—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, the member from Niagara Falls and I were both elected on the same day, just last month, so I feel certain camaraderie with him, and I would have enjoyed supporting his first private member's bill. Unfortunately, I find myself unable to do so. Providing a job creator tax credit is just not a serious solution to Ontario's job crisis.

This idea was actually reviewed by the government's Jobs and Prosperity Council, led by former RBC chief Gord Nixon. On page 23 of their report, entitled Advantage Ontario, the council rejected this idea as unrealistic, saying, "The cost may be significantly greater than what has been estimated since the credit would apply to all new jobs created in the economy, not just net new jobs."

Furthermore, the council noted that the tax credit could be used to pay for jobs that would have been created without the credit, and it may be difficult to target export-based jobs or jobs in more productive sectors.

Finally, the council noted that the increase in compliance and reporting costs for businesses and added complexity to the tax system would be material and the burden on businesses would be increased, particularly to small and medium business operators, meaning that there would be enormous costs on top of the credit. That means additional red tape and bureaucracy to give business an incentive to hire new employees.

It seems to me that the member from Niagara Falls and the third party caucus are intent on creating more barriers to job growth, increasing taxes and more government spending.

The Jobs and Prosperity Council concluded that implementing a tax credit would result in significant fiscal risk and may not achieve the desired objective most efficiently.

Ontarians deserve a genuine jobs plan, not unrealistic gimmicks proposed by the member from Niagara Falls and the third party caucus. Since the McGuinty-Wynne government does not have a jobs plan—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Niagara Falls, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to thank the members from Durham, Essex, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Kitchener–Waterloo, Vaughan, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and Thornhill. I'll try to do this as quick as I can.

First of all, I can tell the members here what's not working, and that's corporate tax cuts. They're not creating one job—\$770 million on that.

You brought up the prosperity council. I can tell you that several of those CEOs who sat on that panel have

actively embraced outsourcing our jobs. When you take a look at the wording in that thing, a lot of them were weak words—"may," "could," "might"—so I'm not so sure that's a good example.

When you talk about other areas where it hasn't worked or it doesn't work, I can tell you that officials in Ohio have a similar credit system in place which they said was a key factor in the decision by Heinz to invest in the expansion in their state. Even while they closed operations in Ontario—now, they haven't closed the entire operation. They brought some jobs back, but close to 500 jobs were lost at Heinz. When you say it's not working, it's working in six states currently today, so I'm not so sure that's an accurate statement.

I would like to make a comment on the member from Durham who talked about the Niagara Falls riding. I appreciate the kind words, but I want to be clear not only to the member from Durham but the entire House. You're right: I'm extremely passionate. I'm a strong voice for everybody in Niagara Falls. I was that when I was a city councillor, being elected for the last three and a half years. It was always about jobs.

I'd just like to close by saying that I hope my colleagues can support my motion. Collectively, we have an obligation to work together for our communities. But, more importantly, our children and our grandchildren need hope and a future—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on that item at the end of private members' business.

REDUCING GRIDLOCK AND IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 VISANT À RÉDUIRE L'ENGORGEMENT ROUTIER ET À AMÉLIORER L'ÉCOULEMENT DE LA CIRCULATION

Mrs. Martow moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management / Projet de loi 181, Loi exigeant la constitution d'un comité consultatif pour formuler des recommandations au ministre des Transports et au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne l'amélioration de la gestion des incidents de la route.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I was sworn in, I sat with one of my staff members and the Clerk, who is not here right now—Ms. Deller—in her office. We were going over my roles and responsibilities as the newly elected member for Thorn-

hill. I was elected just this February and quickly given my ballot date for my first private member's bill. I'm happy to advise the House that my staff and offices are up and running, and here we are today in the House debating that first private member's bill, Bill 181, the Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow Act, 2014.

Before I start talking about my bill, Bill 181, I'd like to thank a couple of people who assisted me in crafting this. First off, I want to thank Ms. Susan Klein, legislative counsel, and Mr. Alex Beduz, who is my caucus's senior legislative adviser. Both assisted with the drafting and refinement of the bill for its debate today.

I commute from Thornhill every day. I drive, and often I take the subway. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, who is contemplating leaving the room but may not now, was—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to go to the bathroom. Mrs. Gila Martow: Sorry; go ahead. Nature calls, I guess.

Some \$640 million is being spent in York region on bus lanes, as he's aware, and he offered to me himself to come and review the situation in Thornhill. After numerous contacts with his office, we have not received a date, and I'm very disappointed. I know he's busy—we're all busy—but it was his generous offer to me. I'm looking forward to setting a date very soon to visit the gridlock in Thornhill. What his government's funding and planning in York region is doing to create worse gridlock, not better gridlock.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities pegs the average commute time at 80 minutes for those who go to and from work in Toronto. This is much longer than North American cities like Los Angeles, which has an average commute time of 56 minutes, Vancouver at 67 minutes and New York City at 68 minutes.

My own parents, in their 70s, love to travel. They did travel fairly light. They had to get out of a taxicab half a mile from LAX, Los Angeles airport, and walk to the airport to make their flight because of the gridlock. That was about 20 years ago, and do you know what? Toronto is heading in the same direction. We have a lot to learn from California. They're getting their debt under control, and we need to get ours under control as well.

In the Ontario PC Party's Paths to Prosperity white papers, An Agenda for Growth and Building Great Cities, we discuss different options to address gridlock in Ontario. To alleviate traffic volumes, we suggest conducting road construction and maintenance work overnight. As well, we mention that we will clear accidents quicker to avoid dead stops in traffic that cause gridlock.

Another option that we should consider is having garbage collection done on arterial roads overnight, as opposed to during the business day, to reduce traffic volumes for all road users, whether they are drivers, passengers, public transit users, pedestrians or cyclists. Just this week, I saw two garbage trucks at 9:30 in the morning on Avenue Road picking up garbage. The traffic was backed up, and I asked myself: Why can't it be done

the way it's done in the downtown core, where the garbage is collected overnight? All of New York City—on the main island, garbage is collected overnight. We have to accept that we're a major metropolis and start acting like it.

Those of us who drive to Queen's Park sometimes encounter a minor accident. You have traffic in front of you slowing down, sometimes at a standstill, looking at this visual distraction. Traffic in the opposite direction cannot help but look at the incident, slowing down the commute for all. Unfortunately, not everyone driving on our roads knows and follows the rules. For example, drivers who are involved in a minor accident may not be aware that if the damage to their vehicle is minor and if their automobiles are still operable, they are to drive to a local collision reporting centre to advise of the incident. They do not require the police to be at the scene of the accident to take down a report.

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That is why one of the four items I would like the advisory committee to make recommendations on is: "Providing public education programs to improve driver behaviour in circumstances involving highway incidents."

If drivers are aware of how to address minor accidents and where the local collision reporting centres are located, this will clear our roads in a timely fashion and reduce the onset of rubberneckers—the traffic in the opposite direction who slow down to look at the incident.

Presently, if drivers see an emergency vehicle coming towards them to attend to a situation, they are expected to safely pull over and let them through. We, as a government, should establish public awareness campaigns for this type of emergency response.

Furthermore, the government can increase its awareness with respect to distracted driving campaigns and not limit them to the Compass signage network.

With this in mind, the committee should also look into reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents, and to clear highways after accidents occur. Police forces could develop protocols to address their response to highway incidents for all types of accidents, and they can include performance standards for the clearance of highways; use of special teams to expedite their response, investigation and clearance; along with enhancing their investigative techniques to ascertain how the incidents occurred.

If the information is provided in a timely and accurate manner, those who work in traffic incident management can advise commuters of this occurrences and road users can make accommodations to address these incidents. It can consist of informing motorists with Compass sign systems on our 400-series highways or the installation of mobile message signs by the proper authorities in advance of an upcoming accident.

Furthermore, by addressing gridlock, we are working towards making Ontario's highways safer and more secure. All of us—commuters, passengers, first responders, municipalities and, of course, those of us who work

in the Legislature—have a responsibility in addressing gridlock. In June 2011, the Toronto Board of Trade issued a report advising that gridlock is the greatest threat to economic prosperity in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, estimating that it costs \$6 billion in lost productivity each year. As much as gridlock is an economic issue, it is also a social and health issue that needs to be addressed

Time is a precious commodity. We're losing quality time that could be spent with our families, with our friends, maybe time that we could spend exercising. I think even our pets with looking a little sad these days. Mine sure is.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Exactly. And we're missing important appointments and important life events because of the worsening gridlock, not to mention businesses that can't receive their deliveries or get their deliveries out on time.

We should do better, we can do better and we will do better. What I am asking the Ministers of Transportation and Community Safety and Correctional Services to do with the passage of Bill 181 is to convene an advisory committee within 60 days of my bill receiving royal assent. This committee would be comprised of individuals and staff who are experts in traffic incident management to look at these four issues that I've highlighted in my bill and for review. Here they are:

(1) Providing public education programs to improve driver behaviour in circumstances involving highway incidents.

(2) Reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents and to clear highways after the occurrence of highway incidents.

(3) Providing timely and accurate information about highway incidents to drivers.

(4) Enhancing the safety and security of Ontario's highways.

The advisory committee has eight months to investigate these concerns. When they report back to the respective ministers on their recommendation, each minister will have 60 days to advise the assembly of what recommendations we will implement.

We all have our own worst story about being caught in gridlock. The problem is that we don't have any overflow roads. We are beyond capacity on our highways, and alternative routes aren't even available.

I recall a few years ago having to call somebody to replace me in carpool. I gave myself half an hour extra to get from Sunnybrook, where I was visiting my mother, to Bathurst and Finch to do my carpool, and the traffic wasn't moving. It didn't matter which road I tried to take. There didn't even seem to be an accident. I couldn't hear anything on the radio. It was 3:30 in the afternoon. Carpool pickup was only 4:30 and I had to call somebody to be there for me. That's very stressful and I think that's affecting everybody's health, not to mention the fumes that people are breathing in. I want to remind people that if there are holes in the undercarriage of your car and

you're sitting in traffic, you could be getting poisoned with carbon monoxide.

Gridlock affects all of us, regardless if we drive, take public transit, bike or walk to and from our place of destination. I would like the government to look at this issue and hope that all members support my bill, Bill 181, the Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow Act, 2014

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting the bill presented by the member from Thornhill, and I'm quite eager to send it to committee for discussion and to have a whole lot of people speak to the bill. I think the objectives are harmless enough and positive enough.

When she talks about the report from the advisory committee and what it would do: public education programs for driver behaviour—it's hard to disagree with that; reducing the time for authorities to detect incidents and clear highways—I think that's a useful suggestion; provide timely and accurate information on incidents to drivers—I think that's good; enhance highway safety and security—I think those objectives are quite reasonable. But to present this bill as a bill that would ease gridlock, I'm not quite sure. I think it would be helpful, but I think it disguises many other problems that need to be addressed, and this bill doesn't address many of the real problems of gridlock.

Yes, there have been fatalities all over Ontario in the past years and it's sad, of course. We have made some progress, including the OPP safety program that directs resources to high-risk highway areas to reduce collisions, and so all that is good. Some efforts have been made to deal with some aspects of highway incidents, and there's more to be done, to be sure. I think this bill, by way of this expert advisory council to look at more of these things—I think that's okay. But this is presented as a bill that would reduce gridlock, and that's where I have some of the problemos around it.

You'll recall that my colleague from Timmins–James Bay and my other colleagues from Timiskaming–Cochrane and Kenora–Rainy River and others from the north have raised the multiple problems we've had around northern road maintenance and how many of these services were privatized by the then Mike Harris regime, God bless his soul. They thought that would be the way to deal with some of the problems of the north, but we realized over the years—at least northern members have realized—that when we privatized or contracted out snowplowing services, that caused many more problems than we ever anticipated. Of course, they privatized the dispatch patrolling, which created additional problems. Actually, the Liberals thought that was a good idea and they kept with it over the years.

It took our members from northern Ontario years to try to persuade this minister and previous ministers to deal with this problem of contracting out services. It was pointed out that not only have we not solved problems; we created and aggravated new ones. Finally, in 2013, the Minister of Transportation took note, as if somehow by divine guidance, and they're going to be moving on it. But it took many, many years for our members to push a little bit every year until they heard us.

I just wanted to remind the member from Thornhill that they were the ones who contracted out this particular service, but I also want to point out that this bill doesn't deal with the fact that the Progressive Conservative Party wants to cut the LRT projects in the GTA, particularly Hamilton and Hurontario-Main in Mississauga. That's concerning, because those are attempts by those municipalities to try to get people going by building LRT.

We're hoping the provincial government is committed to these projects. I'm not quite sure, in Hamilton, whether they're committed or not, but we hope they are.

These are attempts to move people along.

When the Progressive Conservative Party talks about their desire to solve gridlock by finding billions of dollars in government waste, good luck; I don't know where they're going to find these billions of dollars to deal with waste and to deal with other social deficits that they and the Liberals have left us with in health, education and our social services. They're going to find billions for transit to solve gridlock, internally? By divine intervention, I'm certain they will find it—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: God bless.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm not sure they're going to find it. I am profoundly concerned that if this is the way to deal with gridlock, we are in deep doo-doo.

I think that this bill is okay. It's good. We could be pushing it along. But all I ask the member from Thornhill to do is not to present it as a way to solve gridlock.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management. It's the first bill presented, as she's new to the House, by the member from Thornhill. I want to congratulate her.

Speaker, this bill seeks to improve road safety for Ontarians, and that is something we can all agree on.

I agree with the member opposite that gridlock is a problem in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. However, the solution to that congestion problem is not what is being presented today in this bill. What is a solution to that gridlock problem is what our government has presented by way of Metrolinx, which is the Big Move. This is the greater Toronto and Hamilton area's regional transit plan, which is designed specifically to deal with the growing problem of congestion in our region. It looks to build a comprehensive, efficient network of multi-modal transit, transportation and cycling to get our region moving.

In fact, the Big Move requires the support of the other parties opposite in order for us to move forward with the investments that we need to make in infrastructure, and I think that its the focus that we should be having in terms of fighting gridlock and congestion.

That said, I do believe that road safety and the well-being of Ontarians is something that is also very important, and that's a reason for us to examine the merits of Bill 181 more closely.

This bill may address things that are already covered, and I think we need to ensure that we are not duplicating what the Ministry of Transportation has already done or is in the process of doing. The Ministry of Transportation has run numerous public awareness campaigns on road safety, and has very strict regulations on impaired, distracted and aggressive drivers, which directly contribute to the protection of people on our roads in Ontario.

One of the key components of the bill, as it is proposed, is public awareness and education. However, our government currently maintains several public awareness campaigns directly targeted towards safety on our roads. In fact, we work very closely with over 150 road safety partners from right across this province. I just today met with MADD, one of those partners, which has been working relentlessly on how to improve safety on our roads in Ontario.

Furthermore, for the past 10 years, Ontario has ranked first or second in North America in terms of road safety. Our government continues to improve on road safety conditions by introducing important legislation like Bill 173, the Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe Act, 2014.

But despite this, far too many Ontarians are injured or fatally injured every year on our roads in Ontario due to accidents. On average, one person is killed every 15 hours, and that is unacceptable. On average, a person is injured on our roads every 8.1 minutes.

That is why our government is willing to work with opposition members, our stakeholders, the OPP and the local police to make Ontario roads safe—and in fact, even with individual drivers. This government is committed to enhancing the safety and security of the highway travel in this province in order to improve the lives of all Ontarians.

Bill 181 goes on to ask that the committee established, should this bill pass, recommend ways to provide more timely and accurate information about highway incidents and reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and to verify highway incidents. I would agree with that, that we need to have the best information possible that is disseminated to drivers to ensure that we keep our roads safe. This bill should continue past second reading to the committee stage in order for us to analyze if these aspects of the bill—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Should it go to second reading? What do you think? Should it go or not?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It should go so that we can do the deep analysis—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to speak to the Chair and ignore the comments from the other side.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: —so that we can further analyze the aspects of the bill that are already in place and that are being addressed and look for where there are gaps that exist so that we can continue to have safe roads here in Ontario, ensuring that we work very, very closely with the Ministry of Transportation.

So I do support moving this bill along into the committee stage so that we can further do this examination, and, should it pass the committee stage, that we will ensure that we have a bill that indeed will have the desired outcome of keeping Ontario's roads safe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a great pleasure to be able to rise today and speak on behalf of the member from Thornhill's bill. This is her first private member's bill and, I congratulate her on—I haven't done it officially. I congratulate her on her election, as well as so quickly putting her first private member's bill out. It can be a little daunting, I know, when you're learning the ropes, but congratulations nonetheless.

This is actually a bill that is something I talk about quite often on my journeys to and from Barrie. As many people know in this House, travel on the 400 is sometimes quite arduous, especially in the wintertime. There's a section of the 400 we call kind of the Bermuda triangle of the 400, where, between Highways 88 and 89, there are constantly accidents on a beautiful stretch of road that—

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Sorry, the member from York—Simcoe's riding. This stretch of highway has this bizarre history of accidents on it for no reason. It's actually a clear strip of road that has no bizarre obstacles or anything about it, but there always seem to be closures on this road.

What I find interesting about this bill is its specific nature in dealing with incidents on the road. We're not just talking about highway safety, which is of course important, but we're talking about keeping traffic moving, which I think is the focus of this bill: to make sure that on our 400-series highways and other highways, especially in and around the GTA, we keep traffic moving. We know that a lot of times, a lot of our gridlock and a lot of the traffic is caused by people watching, rubbernecking, and accident investigations taking much longer than they need to take. In many cases, they take hours and hours.

1450

If we start to apply a little bit of pressure, if we start to make sure that investigators—the police—and emergency services are able to do their job properly but do it quickly—it is something that we need to focus on as well, to keep our economy moving, to keep people from creating more accidents through frustration and other things. This bill certainly addresses that in such a specific way that I think it makes it very unique.

We know that there's billions of dollars—I think specifically \$6 billion—lost annually in gridlock. Whatever we can do to make sure that we reduce the amount of incidents, for starters, but also make sure people know what to do when there is an incident on the highway, how they behave and the importance of moving along, maybe even modifying our responses, so that we keep our traffic moving, so that our economy can keep moving, so people can get home to their families or get to work on time and goods can get to market faster—anything that can make that happen I think is a positive thing. I think this bill goes a long way to making that happen, and I commend the member for her efforts to do that, because this is something a lot of people think about but not a lot of people put their heads to how to get it done.

When you look at some of the stats in North America, we have the longest commute times in North America. A lot of people think of LA when they think of gridlock; it's actually Toronto and the GTA that's got the most gridlock—80 minutes, compared to Los Angeles with 56 minutes and Vancouver with 67. So we obviously have a lot of work to do here. It's not going to happen through education alone; it's going to happen through awareness and it's going to happen through trying to modify our

responses to these incidents as well.

With that said, Speaker, I want to leave some time for my colleagues to speak to this as well. I look forward to the debate and I look forward to supporting this bill when it comes to a vote today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm glad for the opportunity to rise and speak in the House on private member's Bill 181. The bill, of course, was introduced by the new member from Thornhill, and I want to congratulate the member on the introduction of her first private member's bill. This seems to be a good one.

I think we can all agree in the House that governments do have an important role to play in improving road safety at all levels, whether it's municipal, provincial or federal. I think Ontario has made significant changes over the years to improve road safety, things such as the mandatory wearing of seatbelts, mandatory use of booster seats, stiffer penalties for street racing, and banning

handheld devices while driving.

You know, Speaker, in doing research on traffic injuries, I came across some very interesting statistics from the Traffic Injury Research Foundation. According to the foundation, one out of every two Canadians will be injured in a road crash during their lifetime; almost 40% of all traffic fatalities result from road crashes—actually, road crashes are actually the leading cause of death for Canadians under the age of 40; traffic collisions are the third leading cause of death in Canada; nearly one in every 100 people in this country will be killed or injured on our roads; and road crashes claim nearly 3,000 lives and injure 200,000 people in Canada every year.

Road safety is paramount. Our lives do depend on it. We have millions of Ontarians who take to our roads every day. Everyone wants to get from point A to point B, and they want to get there just as fast as they can. We also know of the immeasurable pain and loss endured by crash victims and their families. I'll bet you everyone in this House knows someone personally or knows of someone who has lost a family member or a friend in a traffic accident.

I know one story that my constituents remember well: the traffic pileup on the 401 just outside of my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh in the early hours of September 3, 1999. It was a Friday in the long Labour Day weekend. I was a reporter at the time—a video journalist. I had my gear in the truck, but I had taken that day off, for an extra long weekend, so I wasn't called out to the story. A blanket of fog rolled in over the 401. Drivers kept going, unaware that they couldn't see where they were going when they hit that wall of fog—fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandparents.

What followed would come to be regarded as one of the worst accidents in Ontario's history. When the fog had cleared, 87 vehicles were either damaged or destroyed, 40 people were injured and eight people had perished. Survivors will never be able to forget the anguished cries and screams. The 87 vehicles involved were a mass of crumpled metal and burning plastic. It

was a tragic scene, Speaker.

I know some of the victims, people who still bear the scars of that terrible tragedy. In fact, I had one of the survivors in my office just this week. I praise the first responders and the civilians who assisted those in need that day. You never really get over something like that.

Our first responders do a remarkable job of keeping the highways safe, and the member for Parkdale–High Park has been a relentless advocate for recognizing the contributions of our first responders and the elevated mental health risks they face in the line of duty each and every day. Her Bill 67, which provides presumptive PTSD coverage for first responders, passed second reading on February 27, and we thank her for her contributions.

Back to the bill, Speaker: I like the fact that it clearly delineates timelines. That mechanism will be worked out in committee. The OPP is involved in it, and that's a very good thing as well.

The committee will analyze highway incident management, develop a program to improve highway incident management and report back within eight months of the establishment of the committee. That'll be good.

I just want to shift gears quickly, Speaker, in the little time I have left.

The term "gridlock" came into being in the 1980s, when a guy I know by the name of Sam Schwartz, Gridlock Sam, coined it down in New York City. He was a former traffic commissioner down there. We hired Sam as a traffic expert—a gridlock expert—in Windsor during the Herb Gray Parkway construction project. The government of the day wanted 12 lanes of traffic, six in each direction—no bridges, no tunnels, no overpasses, no walking trails. Sam came up with a plan. Eventually,

after a lot of public pressure and public participation, the government accepted it.

Thank you to Gridlock Sam for his pioneering work, and thank you to Gridlock Gila for coming up with this private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further dehate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'm really pleased to rise and speak on Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management.

I would like to begin by congratulating the member on her first private member's bill. I have to say that I think it has been barely, what, a month? I know that in my first month, I was nowhere near being ready. I didn't know what a PMB was, never mind introducing one. So, well done.

I also want to let the member know that I actually happen to agree with her stated goal, which I read here: Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow. How can you not? What's not to like about that? What I'm not so sure about, though, is the means.

I have to say, Speaker, that when I first heard about the act, I was a little surprised. I actually said to Ryan, "Are you sure this is a PC member's bill?" When I read the words "An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee," this is the sort of thing that the party opposite has railed against repeatedly and has said it is a waste of time to have any kind of committee, any kind of consultation. It's refreshing to see that a member is bringing forward the idea that we need to consult and that we need advisory panels.

But I think there's a double standard here, because when we do it, it's all wrong. Suddenly, when I hear the members opposite bringing a bill forward on this topic and hearing them support it, I'm a little confused as to where they stand on the issue. Nonetheless, I'm pleased that they do think that there is a role for citizens' panels and there is a role for consultation with government.

I am, I have to say, a little bit concerned when I read that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, prescribe remuneration and payment of expenses for committee reports. I'm all for citizens' panels, but I want some clarification as to whether this is remuneration just for their out-of-pocket expenses to come to our committee or if this is remuneration for their services, and what that means to the taxpayer. I look forward to hearing some clarification.

I have to agree with my colleague here, the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, as well as some of the NDP members who said that if our goal is indeed to reduce gridlock and improve traffic flow, is this the best use, is this the best way to do it?

I'm interested when the member opposite says, "Reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents..." I want to know if this is

based on some empirical evidence. Is there a jurisdictional analysis that shows that the response time in Ontario is significantly slower than other jurisdictions? I'm not saying it is or it isn't, but I'm just looking for some context and evidence that show that indeed we need to do that, because perhaps Ontario is already on the leading edge on this. Or is it not? That sort of information would be most useful.

Again, as I said in starting, in principle I support it, but as always, the devil is in the details. I think context is always important. We have to view this initiative in the context that Ontario today has one of the safest road systems in the world. I think that I heard the member from Scarborough–Guildwood say as well that for the last 12 years Ontario has been ranked either first or second in North America for road safety.

Certainly legislation plays a role. We've recently brought forward some more legislation, the Road Safety Act, which looks to rein in distracted driving. But I think the single most important tool that all of us have to improve road safety is simply driver education. The reason Ontario has done so well is because government has partnered with associations like MADD and the CAA. Drunk driving comes down not just because you have a breath analyzer; drunk driving comes down not just because you get demerit points; it comes down because of education. This is something that we have done well, and the evidence is in the fact that we have for the last 12 years ranked either first or second in North America, keeping in mind that many of our roads in northern Ontario are in probably the toughest climate. It's not California with 365 days of clear weather. Despite having very rough terrain and weather, we have managed this very creditable safety as a jurisdiction, so clearly we have been doing a lot of things right.

So while I support the bill in principle, I think it would be nice to have some evidence to suggest that we really need to work further, that we as a jurisdiction are somehow falling behind in our response rates. But once again, I congratulate the member for trying. This is a very good topic to tackle, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure and an honour this afternoon to follow up on the remarks by our newly elected member from Thornhill, Mrs. Martow. Congratulations on a very thoughtful presentation. Your remarks this afternoon show that you brought the policy into reality, explaining your mother going to the hospital and you trying to catch your connections. It really does show that you represent the people as a voice for the people of Thornhill. Again, after such a short period of time, I find that in the House and in caucus your effectiveness is remarkable, and so quickly. It shows that you are a very professional woman. Welcome.

I think that quite quickly, in this short period of time, she summarized and established the need for a recognition that gridlock is a drag on the economy—as she states it, \$6 billion. One has to ask oneself what the current government is doing, especially the Minister of Transportation-nothing but talk so far. Yes, they're putting money in. What government hasn't put money in?

But having the soft strategies is what she's bringing to the discussion. What she really wants to do is establish an advisory committee that would—I believe it's eight months in the bill itself—look into four particular issues. I think the fact that she categorized where she feels the best return would be for the investment of expertise and people's time is of value.

I can say that she started with the primary beginning of education and educating the driver today, the person behind the wheel—that's an important point of view and looking at accidents and incident management. That's been looked at in other jurisdictions, and I think you referenced Los Angeles and how one time your parents had to walk to the airport from the taxi, the gridlock was so bad.

We have a report in our policy booklet. I encourage the viewer to get a handle on this. It's Paths to Prosperity: Building Great Cities. There's quite an important section in this book and I would just point it out, about getting around in other large cities and where Ontario stands. There are two very important recommendations in this that follow up very nicely on the points that the member from Thornhill is making. She talks about travel times to work and other functions in various large cities.

I thought the practical suggestions she brought forward are the kinds of ideas that are missing from the discussions I hear from the Minister of Transportation. Looking at New York City was one of your examples, of having the garbage collection in the commercial areas at night when there's no gridlock. What a novel idea. It's so

simple. Why don't we just do it?

Accident reporting of minor events: There's not enough. Perhaps the insurance companies could follow up and put it in your bill that if it's a minor accident under \$1,000 or something, go to a reporting centre. Maybe they could even provide a better service.

It's that dialogue, that education, that's paramount in everything she's saying. That could all be incorporated into driver education, all of that information. But incident management, I think, is where she has the best advantage in her bill. I can assure you that I will be supporting it

I will also comment on her contribution because, during her election, a great amount of time was spent on the gridlock question and about public transit. Our policies within Paths to Prosperity recognize the differences, and we will move forward with an aggressive plan for Ontario to lead again.

Thank you for your bill; it's a worthwhile read.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of Bill 181, the Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow Act. Particularly, I want to applaud the effort of my colleague, the member from Thornhill. As others have remarked already today, she is newly arrived here at Oueen's Park and here she is with her first private member's bill. I think that around the chamber today, most of us would agree that this is certainly a timely thing for discussion.

Many of us are commuters. The member for Barrie talked about a section of the 400 that he drives through that's in my riding, and I certainly have had many, many hours sitting on the highways and byways in gridlock. I have witnessed roads that had exceeded their safe capacity decades ago. It seems like it's just getting worse.

It makes you feel better-not much, but a little bit better-when, as a participant in this gridlock, you estimate the kind of cost that would be involved. But when you see it written down, that it's \$6 billion a year, it gives you a sense of, "Well, it isn't just my imagination and it's not just my frustration. This is very real." It discourages the economy.

I think in looking at the suggestion of this bill today, we need to look at: How do we get to this place? I already mentioned that roads have been over capacity for decades, and when we look back, it's interesting to note that when you look over the last 50 years, most of the infrastructure was done during the time of Progressive Conservative governments, and when we look at the kinds of things that limit us today, those are in fact the roadways that were put here 30 or 40 years ago, and somehow, despite the increase in our population, they are still there.

I think one of the things about gridlock that doesn't get referred to often enough is the impact on air pollution. I would say that, regularly, my trip here is one hour longer than it should be, and that's assuming that the weather isn't too bad or that there hasn't been a closure. It's just simply volume. So when you think of spending one more hour every single trip than you need to, and your car is running—I rest my case. The idea that I could drive for an hour instead of sit for an hour would make a huge difference, never mind to the wear and tear on my

The other point she raised was the question of highway incidents, and in the moment I have I would just like to indicate support for the mechanisms that she has put in place here, because there are other jurisdictions who have beat us to the draw, so to speak, in coming up with efficient methods of getting vehicles off the road. In some cases, they are years ahead of us on this.

I think the notion that the member brings in terms of bringing people together who are experts—the OPP, the appropriate ministers—would create the kind of management and oversight that would lead to some significant benefits to come from such a bill.

So I want to congratulate the member from Thornhill and urge everyone to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Thornhill, you have two minutes for a re-

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to first thank my caucus colleagues, the member for Barrie, the member for Durham and the member for York-Simcoe, for speaking in support of my bill, which is Bill 181.

I want to address some of the comments made by the other parties—also my colleagues, of course, in the room.

I'll address first, very quickly, the member for Windsor-Tecumseh. He brought up an important point, which is that the cost is much more than economical; the cost is lost lives, lost family members, and, of course, without sounding too jaded, the cost to our health care system as well. So we should consider that.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood mentioned Metrolinx and the Big Move, and are we possibly duplicating, with this bill, other things? No, because this bill is not concentrating just on road safety; it's concentrating on the flow of traffic, getting people where they need to go, where they want to go—and goods and services as well. I had high hopes for the Big Move, but unfortunately, seeing \$640 million being spent on eastwest bus lanes instead of getting the subway north on Yonge is a little disappointing, as you can imagine, to all the residents in Thornhill.

The member from Trinity-Spadina spoke very nicely; thank you very much. It's really about getting those collisions cleared quickly and educating people that they don't have to sit and wait for police officers if it's just a minor collision. Get off the road. The cost is too high for safety, because they're blocking traffic, as well as lost productivity.

To the member from Mississauga East, I would just want to mention that I believe it was last year that a Honda Civic sat on the 401 refusing to move even though there was a tow truck there, because the driver wanted to wait for his free CAA tow truck. I've already spoken to CAA in York region about the issue, and they agreed that they would like to be involved in this advisory committee to see if something could be worked out where other tow trucks could be reimbursed—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much. Wait: One more point?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 26, 2014, the time provided for private members' public business has expired.

JOB CREATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 82, standing in the name of Mr. Gates.

Mr. Gates has moved private members' notice of motion number 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay." In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

REDUCING GRIDLOCK AND IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À RÉDUIRE L'ENGORGEMENT ROUTIER ET À AMÉLIORER L'ÉCOULEMENT DE LA CIRCULATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Martow has moved second reading of Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management. Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—and I refer to the member to for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell. *The division bells rang from 1516 to 1521.*

JOB CREATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Gates has moved private members' notice of motion number 65. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Campbell, Sarah DiNovo, Cheri Forster, Cindy Gates, Wayne Hatfield, Percy Horwath, Andrea Marchese, Rosario Miller, Paul Natyshak, Taras Prue, Michael Tabuns, Peter Taylor, Monique Vanthof, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Elliott, Christine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Hardeman, Ernie Holyday, Douglas C. Hoskins, Eric Hunter, Mitzie Jackson, Rod Jaczek, Helena Kwinter, Monte Leal, Jeff Leone, Rob MacCharles, Tracy MacLaren, Jack Mangat, Amrit Matthews, Deborah McKenna, Jane McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil

Milloy, John Moridi, Reza Munro, Julia Murray, Glen R. Naqvi, Yasir Nicholls, Rick O'Toole, John Ouellette, Jerry J. Pettapiece, Randy Qaadri, Shafiq Sergio, Mario Smith, Todd Walker, Bill Wilson, Jim Wong, Soo

Meilleur, Madeleine

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 48.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When we last debated this item, we had gone to further debate. It's the NDP's turn. The member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to talk to Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I want to start by saying that this is a feel-good kind of bill. I want to review the feel-good elements of it. When I first saw this bill, I said, what the heck is in it? It didn't appear as if it had much that was important. But then you look through it and you say, "Okay, let me review them one by one."

It says that all broader public sector entities must consider a special list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions related to infrastructure. These principles include things like taking a long-term view—which is a good thing, by the way—and that decision—makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of demographic and economic trends in Ontario. Okay. That's good.

By the way, the idea of taking a long-term view of a contract when you give it out to the private sector is a suggestion that is made by the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario. They've been saying this for a while.

Others have been saying it—people like the Vancouver Island Construction Association: "Our research demonstrates that the effect of project bundling on construction procurement is to unintentionally shut out small and medium-sized domestic contractors ... from competing, thereby reducing the pool of competitors to the very select few. It logically follows that the resulting reduction in competition leads to higher bid prices overall. This method of procuring construction generates a perverse result, and undermines the very foundation of the public procurement process."

That's one of the quotes that I want to speak to. It wasn't the exact quote I was looking for, but it speaks to the whole issue of taking into account the whole lifespan of the project when we assess the total value of a project. It's a good thing, and it's good that the government is listening to the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario.

The second one is that the Minister of Infrastructure must periodically develop a 10-year infrastructure plan, providing a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs. Each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public. Okay, that's good. I'm not sure how radical this whole thing is, but this is okay.

The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets. Criteria include whether the project fits in with municipal plans. Okay. It's nothing radical, but there you have it.

Subject to specifics in regulation to be developed, the government must require that architects and other design professionals relating to infrastructure be involved in the design of infrastructure assets. I say, yes, that's good. It's something that the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario has been saying for quite some time. Finally, the government, through this minister, has decided to reflect their views in a bill, so that they bring them along and say to them, "We're on your side. We've got a bill that says we've been listening to you." That's good.

The government must require that certain numbers of apprentices be employed in the construction or maintenance of infrastructure projects, and that number would be prescribed in legislation. This is good, too. It's something that many of the construction trades have been pushing for, and that labour groups in general have been pushing for.

1520

So the minister has been listening, and I say that this is good. He's got a bill to reflect that, as a way of saying to the construction trades, "We're listening to you." But it's a feel-good kind of thing.

The final thing is, the bill provides the regulatory authority for the Minister of Infrastructure to establish a regulation on almost any infrastructure issue imaginable. The ministry must consult with relevant stakeholders before a regulation is made under the act—I say, okay; something you expect the government to do. But that is, in essence, the effect of the bill. There ain't much in it, which is why I wanted to make reference to each of the main points of the bill.

Ultimately not revolutionary, not radical, but it's an attempt to get the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario on board, an attempt to get some of the construction trades on board before a possible election—dare I say?—because it could happen. So this is a timely bill. It may not even see the light of the day, but it's a good way to say to these people, "Look, I'm on your side. I'm listening. In case there's an election, please don't vote

against us. If you help us, we could get this bill through because we're listening to you."

The real problemo is that this government is completely committed to public-private partnerships, instituted by the Conservative Party, which now have a different name introduced by the Liberals because they wanted to put their own brand on it. So it's called alternative financing procurement, but it's the same—

Interjection: Thing.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —thing. I was looking for a nasty word. It's the same thing with a different name, one introduced by my fine Tory friends and the other by the Liberals to make it appear, by changing the name, as if it's something totally different. There is no difference whatsoever except the name.

I've got to tell you, Speaker: This Liberal government is completely committed—I quote from ReNew Canada Infrastructure Magazine, where the Premier says, "People have seen there is nothing to fear with AFP [alternative financing and procurement]. We're now expanding the AFP program. If not, the economy will stagnate." She is completely committed to the privatization of our infrastructure programming.

What she's saying is, public procurement doesn't work, and what she's saying is, public procurement is not the way to go. The way to go is to give it away to those big conglomerates to do the job, which is something this Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is committed to. I quoted the Premier as a way of telling you that they're not changing direction.

Public procurement, for New Democrats, is the way to go. We believe in infrastructure spending. We do not believe that sending it to a private conglomerate will do the job.

The Eglinton Crosstown has been given away to a big conglomerate. They were going to have five bidders—or at least they were expecting to have five bidders. They only have two, and the government, through Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario, more or less said, "Two is okay." Normally you're looking for five big bidders. They're not there. You only got two bidders, and Metrolinx said, "It's okay." The minister said, "That's okay."

But you're giving it away to conglomerates. By so doing, you have critics such as the one I quoted earlier in British Columbia and this group called the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario that said, "If we do this, we will be giving away \$500 million, wasted dollars that will go in the deep pockets of the conglomerates, and many of these small construction and design folks are going to be shut out."

Privatization means that when you shift the risk from public procurement and you shift it away by giving it to a private enterprise, what they do, in general, is put a highrisk factor that makes it possible for the private sector to have a better bid process because they put a high-risk premium to make it look good.

What that means is that we're giving away a lot of our own dollars—yours, Speaker, mine and the general public's. We're giving it away to the multinationals that go

you-know-where, in every possible pocket imaginable except yours, mine and the general public's. That's what P3s do. You're giving away the public's money to a private enterprise to do the job that government can do as effectively, if not cheaper.

Infrastructure Ontario should use the expertise they have gathered over the years and make sure that expertise is put in public procurement enterprise. That's what we need to do and that's what this bill doesn't speak to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to follow the member from Trinity–Spadina. I just love his passion and how he comes around talking about this particular bill. I just want to remind the member opposite there are five components to the proposed Bill 141.

One piece I wanted to speak to is about the whole issue of skills training and apprenticeship. I would like to challenge the member opposite because, at the end of the day, we're all concerned in this House about youth unemployment and unemployment rates across the province. If this bill passes, we will be addressing engaging apprentices, and, in terms of construction, having that conversation about infrastructure projects. How can the member opposite not be supportive of this portion of the bill?

The other piece of Bill 141 is about long-term planning. Often communities say, "What is your government"—not just our government but previous governments—"doing in terms of infrastructure projects?" It is the right thing to do to plan long term so that we have long-term strategies, and not just about planning across Ontario but also funding those initiatives. Look at the traffic gridlock concerns every member has in this province. The challenge is that when we don't do proper planning, we have a challenge.

I encourage the member opposite to support the bill because we need to bring forward legislation to talk about infrastructure across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I might say, on a Thursday afternoon, when many members have a break and head for the cottage or whatever they do—well, not a cottage today, but somewhere—to the ski chalet.

I know just how effective a speaker the member from Trinity—Spadina is. I'm here to compliment him on his remarks, not to agree with them. That's the subtle difference. Generally, I find him an inclusive person. But when you look at the details of the bill, in my view—our intention is to support it. I should be clear on that. But when you look at the jobs and prosperity record, there are more people leaving than coming. A lot of it has to do with no vision and no plan. They're actually in defence mode almost continuously here.

The Pan American Games should be a celebration. Indeed, it is a celebration. It's being mismanaged. There's just one example that will create economic activity within the province, within the country, perhaps, and rec-

ognize the future for Ontario—not just Toronto—as a place to be. But then if you look further just at the incidents today on the handling of that file and the last election file, where they had the two gas plants cancelled and there are two investigations—it's dragging all of us down.

I know the member from Trinity-Spadina was talking about infrastructure on Bill 141, but in that climate it's hard to be optimistic. It really is. It actually saddens me to think that so much could be done and it's not being done.

Our Ring of Fire, an opportunity to create prosperity for the indigenous people of Canada—they've walked away from it. There's no climate here for prosperity. This Bill 141—we need to talk about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further questions and comments? The member for Trinity—Spadina—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale-High Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Park-dale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We're close, Mr. Speaker, but we're not the same thing.

I just want to, first of all, commend the member from Trinity-Spadina. It's always fun to listen to him. It's not only passion; it's actually good research.

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Just to build a little bit on what he's saying: When we look at the private part of private-public partnerships—I used to have my own company; I know how companies work—there's nothing wrong with it, but you don't run companies if you don't expect to make a profit. The question is, where is that profit coming from, and where should it go? Really, what he's arguing is that that profit, when it comes to public infrastructure development, should really go back to the public that is funding it in the first place. That's number one.

The other thing that you find often with public-private partnerships is that the treatment of the staff and the payment of the staff is a little bit different too, because if we look at some of the examples where governments have given over their responsibilities—the way I would characterize it—to private companies, you'll see that the first things that go are the standards of pay, the benefits for the labourers. That's also part of private-public partnerships.

You know, tax dollars are precious. I think really very few people—perhaps a few people on this side, certainly in the New Democratic Party—see them as precious. They're precious dollars, dollars entrusted to us. They shouldn't end up in a CEO's pocket or in a shareholder's pocket that's not part of the public. Any profit that is made needs to come back here, and that's the underlying principle of what we're saying here. Nothing wrong with making a profit, nothing wrong with business, but don't make it at the public's expense; that's the point. And no company goes into a deal—no good company—unless they expect to make a profit. That's the logic here, and somehow the Liberals just don't see that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I did enjoy the comments this afternoon from the member from Trinity—Spadina. Unlike others in this House, I happen to be an optimist. I mean, there's no better place in the world to be than in the province of Ontario, and particularly my hometown of Peterborough.

I want to make a little plug here. Later today, I will be dropping the puck at the Evinrude Centre in Peterborough for the 40th anniversary of the Ministry of Natural Resources hockey tournament in Peterborough. It will be a great hockey tournament. People from north, south, east and west will all be convening in Peterborough at 7 p.m. this evening to see Mayor Bennett and I and the deputy minister, Mr. O'Toole—not this John O'Toole from Durham, but the deputy minister from MNR; I just wanted to clarify that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to return to the bill that is in front of us.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I will be dropping that puck for the MNR hockey tournament.

Now, to get back to Bill 141, this is an amazing piece of legislation, because one of the most important things in the province of Ontario is infrastructure. Just today, my colleague—our colleague—the member from Scarborough-Guildwood talked about the 60th anniversary of the subway in Toronto. Of course, Leslie Frost was the Premier at that particular time. Like us, he had a vision for the province of Ontario to invest in infrastructure, and of course, Mr. Frost was right next door to me. His riding then was Victoria-Haliburton, which includes the great community of Lindsay. So we're emulating the kind of vision that he had some 60 years ago today with our Bill 141 to provide a framework going forward, an infrastructure that Ontarians and indeed Peterboroughians count on each and every day to live, work and play, to do their business and get to where they want to go.

So this is important legislation. At some stage, it will be amended, I suspect, and then we can move forward for part of our brighter future right here in Ontario. It's a good bill. Minister Murray should be saluted for bringing it forward.

And, folks, get to see that MNR hockey tournament over the weekend in Peterborough.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank all those who have spoken, but I want to say to the member from Peterborough: This is not an amazing piece of work. It's not amazing. This is just an okay bill, and it's a feel-good bill designed to make some sectors feel good before an election. That's all it is.

The whole idea of infrastructure spending, for New Democrats, is important, and it is good to do. The question is how you do it, and this Liberal government is the most committed to the P3s, public-private partnerships. We're not against the private sector building, because whether we, the public sector, do it or whether we give it

away to a conglomerate, it's going to be the private sector. The question is, who manages it?

I argue, and New Democrats argue, that the public procurement management works better, and it's more effective, in my view, and it's cheaper for the citizens and the taxpayers of Ontario. It is not cheaper to do it the way the Liberals and the Tories have been doing it provincially and federally.

Infrastructure Ontario is completely committed to P3s. So is the Minister of Transportation, and the Liberal government, and, as I quoted, the Premier. They're all committed to this.

There is no independent group that can independently verify the value-for-money audits. They are all supporters of P3s, because they make a whole lot of money supporting P3s, from lawyers to consultants to everybody connected to this. There's a whole lot of pecunia to be made.

I'm telling you, the public sector procurement is the most efficient way to do it. If we do not do that, we're saddling the taxpayers with a whole lot of debt.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: As we know, normally in debate, we go in rotation. After the New Democrats speak, there's a Liberal speaker, a government speaker. Unfortunately, no one stood up. I hope that they are participating in this debate this afternoon, although I gather that they are somewhat distracted by the events that transpired late in question period and the disclosure that, according to the Toronto Star, police allege that Dalton McGuinty's computers were wiped of gas plant info. Our colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton asked, I think, a very appropriate and pertinent question.

I gather that the Premier spoke to the news media this afternoon. Unfortunately, I didn't have the chance to see what she said.

Mr. John O'Toole: She wouldn't take questions.

Mr. Ted Arnott: She didn't take questions and went right back into her office, so it would appear the government is on the defensive—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to speak to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, I agree with your interpretation in that respect, Mr. Speaker, but, of course, this comes back to an infrastructure project, which was the gas plants that were planned for Oakville and Mississauga. Of course, the government decided to cancel those gas plants. Those are certainly infrastructure projects, I think, by anybody's definition. We are discussing an infrastructure bill this afternoon, Bill 141. As you know, Mr. Speaker, those decisions seem to be of concern, obviously, to the people of Ontario, because there was a \$1.1-billion charge to the taxpayers and the ratepayers of Ontario for those cancellations. They appear to have been political decisions—at least, the government certainly has said that they were political decisions intended to support the Liberal candidates in those ridings. It is a very serious concern. I think people in Ontario would expect that we

would be discussing this issue in debate today. Certainly, that's what I wanted to start my comments with.

As you said, Mr. Speaker, we are debating Bill 141, and I want to respect your ruling in that respect. This is Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013, to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning.

Our caucus critic for infrastructure and transportation, the member for Newmarket-Aurora, led off the debate for our caucus. In the context of this debate, he made some great points, I thought. He indicated that our caucus supports the principles advanced in the proposed legislation, such as:

—the need for long-term planning for infrastructure;

—that infrastructure investment should be prioritized, based on a specified list of criteria;

—that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets; and

—that the government should publish, at a minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs, with a strategy to meet those needs.

Certainly, the government would have us believe that this is a great bill.

I was looking at it again, just a few minutes ago, before I had the chance to speak to it. Reading the explanatory note, the bill indicates that, if passed, the government would be required to consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions respecting infrastructure.

Some of the principles that are outlined in the bill are:

—that the government should take a long-term view;

—that the government should be mindful of demographic and economic trends in the province of Ontario;

—that infrastructure planning and investment should take into account any applicable budgets or fiscal plans, such as fiscal plans released under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act;

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—that priorities should be clearly identified;

—that there should be continued provision of core public services, like health and education; and

—that infrastructure planning and investment should promote economic competitiveness, prosperity, productivity, job creation and training opportunities, etc.

All of this sounds fine to me and I think would meet with the approval of my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills, whom I am privileged to serve.

The second part of the bill suggests that the Minister of Infrastructure should periodically develop a long-term infrastructure plan setting out, among other things, a description of the current state of wholly or partly government-owned infrastructure assets, which would include the anticipated infrastructure needs for at least the next 10 years and a strategy to deal with those needs—again, I think that's a reasonable proposition—and that

"The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets," which takes us to section 6 of the bill. Certainly, those are, I think, reasonable suggestions as well, including criteria for prioritizing foundational infrastructure projects: that there needs to be a long-term return on the investment and that it stimulate productivity and economic competitiveness, maximize tax assessment values and tax base growth, support any other public policy goals of the government of Ontario or of any affected municipalities, and provide a foundation for further infrastructure projects.

Again, I think those are reasonable things.

Part 4 of the bill: "Subject to specified limitations, the government must require that architects and persons with demonstrable expertise in and experience with design relating to infrastructure assets be involved in the design of certain infrastructure assets." The bill would compel the government to "require that certain numbers of apprentices be employed or engaged in the construction or maintenance by the government of infrastructure assets," and that "The Minister of Infrastructure must consult with potentially affected persons or bodies before a regulation may be made under the act."

All of these principles that are outlined in the bill, I suspect, could be adhered to without the bill. The government, as a matter of policy and as a matter of its normal way of doing things with respect to infrastructure planning, could do all of this without Bill 141, I would submit. If I'm wrong in that, I would certainly look to the government side to point out how it is wrong. I don't see why they couldn't adhere to this as policy without having a framework in legislation.

We would also, as a caucus, point out the fact that the legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of the proposed principles, and that is a point that our critic, I think, made very clearly when he spoke to this bill at leadoff for our caucus.

Certainly in Wellington-Halton Hills we have a significant number of infrastructure projects that I've brought to the attention of the government over the last, in some cases, years. We have the need for a Morriston bypass—the project is called the Highway 6 Morriston bypass-south of Guelph through Puslinch township, where we have a logjam of traffic through the small community hamlet of Morriston a couple of times a day. When there isn't a logjam, the traffic races through the community in such a way that it seems unsafe for the local residents. But when there is a logjam, it's actually an economic issue for the province, Mr. Speaker. We have recently analyzed the economic cost of that logiam, and it is significant. If the project was prioritized and put on the Ministry of Transportation's five-year construction plan, which is what we've been asking for for years, it would make a significant improvement to transportation in that part of Ontario.

It's not just a local issue. The logjam happens to be in my riding, but if the project were built—when it's built, I should say, it will have tremendous benefits for a big part of Ontario, including Hamilton and the Niagara region. Really, it's a regional project that needs to be built. I continue to call upon the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to place this project on the five-year plan for construction for southern Ontario. We have the support—the strong support—of the municipality, the township of Puslinch and the county of Wellington, and we continue to put this forward to the government for its consideration.

In fact, I have a private member's resolution which is on the order paper—it's the very first resolution on the order paper—calling attention to it. I tabled that the day of the throne speech, actually, so it would be the first private member's resolution on the order paper, and able to continue to have attention called to it.

I've also been informed by the Halton Catholic school board of the need for a new Holy Cross Catholic school in Georgetown. I've raised this with the Minister of Education many times. It is the number one priority for new school construction by the Halton Catholic board, and we hope that the minister would want to do the right thing and respect the decision that was made by the school board trustees to make this the number one priority and approve funding for this new school, which is desperately needed. I could go into great detail, but I'm running out of time. I've visited the school on a number of occasions and, believe me, they've made a good case. This is a priority that should be pursued.

I would also call attention to the fact that the government canceled the Connecting Link Program, which is a very important program for our small municipalities to assist them with the cost of provincial highways that go through built-up areas in our small municipalities. That's a program that I think has existed since 1927, going back to George Howard Ferguson's government, and was cancelled, I think, in December or January last year. We're very, very concerned about that. I have a huge number of municipalities that need to see that program reinstated or an alternative funding stream created to assist them with the projects.

I see that I've run out of time. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and respond to the member from Wellington—Halton Hills. I listened intently to his remarks. I always enjoy listening to the member from Wellington—Halton Hills. He's always calm and collected, and he always brings a measure of talking about the bills and advocating for his community. I really appreciate that he does that.

He brought up a couple of interesting points that I actually agree with. When you're looking at Bill 141—the major portions of this bill—you don't need a new law to do this. Farm folks would call a lot of this stuff, like long-term plans, common sense. You don't need a new law to do a lot of these things. You have to question

whether this has just been put forward so the government of the day has a nice thing to promote. An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act is so uplifting, but deep down in the bill there's not really much.

One point the member from Wellington–Halton Hills brought up that I'd really like to amplify is that this bill is talking about planning and 10-year planning. Was anyone in Wellington–Halton Hills consulted when the Connecting Link Program was cut? Was anyone consulted? This bill talks about consultation. Well, when the Connecting Link Program was cut at the same time in northern Ontario—it's a huge problem in many of my municipalities—no one was consulted. You've got An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, and, "Oh, by the way, one of your major road programs is gone. But feel good, because this is a nice title."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The purpose of the proposed legislation is to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth, protection of the environment and design excellence.

The proposed legislation includes five key components:

Principles: a number of non-binding principles that everyone involved in public infrastructure should be following.

A long-term infrastructure plan: the requirement that the province tables a 10-year plan in the Legislature, with the first plan tabled within three years and subsequent plans tabled every five years.

Project prioritization: requires the province, when evaluating and prioritizing infrastructure project proposals, to consider whether projects support plans and meet additional criteria, taking into account all capital and operating costs over the life of the relevant infrastructure asset.

Design excellence in public works: requires the province to involve architects or persons with demonstrable expertise and experience with design in new provincially owned and funded infrastructure projects.

Skills training and apprenticeship: requires the province to employ or engage apprentices in the construction or maintenance of provincial infrastructure assets.

The last two components require consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council and regulations before coming into force.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to comment on the words of the member for Halton Hills—oh, and you have part of Wellington too, but Halton Hills is an important part. It's part of Halton, of course. It's an important part of his riding. Mr. Ted Arnott: I have important constituents in Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He has some wonderful constituents in Halton Hills, as well, I could point out.

He mentioned the Morriston bypass. Driving along the 401, you see a backup on that highway going down into Morriston. It backs up onto the 401. Of course, you're coming on the 401 at—of course, nobody here would travel at more than 105 kilometres an hour, but coming along the 401, there are cars that do in excess of 120 kilometres an hour, and they don't expect to see cars stopped in that particular location on the 401. It's a huge hazard, and it has been that way for four, five or six years and this government hasn't done a thing.

Now they're talking. They're talking now, six years after these problems existed, 11 years after they've been in power here. Now they're talking about, "Well, let's

plan. Let's develop a plan for the future."

It is so Liberal. Right now, we've got a million people unemployed in the province, and they want to plan, for 10 years out, as to what is going to take place in the province. There's nothing they're doing today to help the million people who woke up this morning—half a million of them have even stopped looking for a job, and there's nothing they're doing today to help these people, to generate some opportunity in this province.

If these projects were to start, yes, there'd be construction. There'd be construction jobs that people could go to, but there's no talk about starting these projects. This is all about planning these projects—some airy-fairy stuff about planning. For goodness' sake, that's not where the rubber hits the road. Let's get on with it. Let's get the people back to work. Let's make something happen in this province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I do generally attend here when I know the speaking order includes people like the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. What's most impressive is how he knows his riding: the potholes, the exits, the connecting links—all of those details. Most people don't realize that he drives around on the weekend, doing his own little inspection of the infrastructure in his community. I mean that quite sincerely.

He spoke of a Catholic high school that's been on the wait-list and promised—he represents his constituents better than anyone in this House, especially on this issue of infrastructure. I believe he's had two questions during question period—which is a very formal part of the procedures here—on his riding in the last week. I know I haven't had one. I've asked for a couple.

I often think this is a tribute to a man who represents his riding effectively. The member from Halton, as well, is a member who represents his riding effectively, generally, in a way that I think is effective as well.

The problem with this whole thing is that Bill 141 itself lacks a vision. In fact, the member from the third party actually said that there's no—John; I call him John. Anyway—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to refrain—

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to look up the name here.

Interjection: Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John O'Toole: Timiskaming—Cochrane. He said that you don't need this bill; get on with the job. That's the issue that we're all trying to say here today. We're all anxious on a Thursday afternoon to do the right thing.

We support the bill only to get it to committee to check it out and see if it's even operable. From my point of view, there's more said than done, and this bill is evidence that the Liberal Party has no plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington-Halton Hills, you have two min-

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, the member for York Centre, the member for Halton and the member for Durham for their kind comments—and their observations, as well—with respect to this important issue, Bill 141.

Yes, the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane was listening to my speech, and he agrees. I would again indicate my belief that the government could move ahead with an infrastructure plan; they don't need this bill. Certainly the member for Halton reiterated that point very effectively.

I would point out to the member for York Centre, who talked about the government's plan to have a long-term infrastructure approach, and again making reference to the Connecting Link issue, it's my belief that the decision to cancel the Connecting Link issue took place when the House had been prorogued, and in the interim between the departure of Premier McGuinty and the Liberal leadership convention. The decision appears to have been made around that time frame.

Municipalities, I know, have expressed concern all across the province to the Minister of Rural Affairs. I know that he's heard about this issue at the ROMA-Good Roads conference. A lot of municipalities are very concerned about it.

The town of the Halton Hills, for example, had a long-term infrastructure plan and does maintain a long-term infrastructure plan for the projects that they know that they need to do, and the cancellation of the Connecting Link Program threw that plan out the window. So, on one hand the government is saying that they need a 10-year, long-term infrastructure plan, but their conscious decisions, like the cancellation of the Connecting Link Program, throw the long-term infrastructure plans the municipalities have right out the window.

Again, the township of Centre Wellington has over 100 bridges that need to be maintained, and in many cases repaired. There are a number of them that are now closed. A number have load restrictions.

The bridge through downtown Fergus, the St. David Street bridge: The fact that they cancelled the Connecting Link Program puts our municipality in a terrible situa-

tion, because the bridge has to be done next year and it's going to cost millions of dollars. Unless the government does something, the municipality is going to have to pay the full shot and the local taxpayers are going to be on the hook for the whole thing. It can't be left that way.

Mr. Speaker, again, thank you for giving me the extra

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this bill that has been given the label the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. What a grand title: Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity. I'm certainly in favour of that. Who wouldn't be in favour of jobs and prosperity? But after looking through this bill, I have to soften my enthusiasm just a little. I'm not sure it provides that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that the title claims.

For decades, investment in Ontario's infrastructure has played a key role in shaping our lives and our economy. A developed infrastructure allows us all to live more fulfilling lives. It allows us to get more easily from point A to B, to travel the province as we need, as we feel the desire to accept everything that Ontario has to offer. It allows us to access the services that we need—health care, schools, colleges and universities—and it makes this province a desirable place to live.

A developed infrastructure also allows us to enjoy the comforts of home: water supplies, utilities and drainage. A lot of these many of us take for granted because they've always been there. We need to remember just a couple of things.

Mr. John Vanthof: Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't believe we have quorum. The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can the

table verify if we have quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quor-

um is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I was just talking about developing infrastructure and how important it was, and how we, in a lot of places in this province, take that for granted.

I was just getting to the point that not everyone in Ontario is able to enjoy the same benefits of this developed infrastructure. Northern and rural areas still don't have a supply of natural gas, for example. We've heard horrific stories of poor water supplies, particularly in some of our First Nations communities. We know that our infrastructure is not equally developed across our province, and we need to remember that.

We also need to remember that our infrastructure needs to be properly maintained. I know that at this time

of the year, especially after the winter we have had, it is the worst time of year to evaluate things. But a drive over some of Ontario's roads just now is a stark reminder of the importance of maintenance. When we thud through those potholes and the wheels hit the ground and the suspension in your seat sends a huge crunch up your back, it's not hard to think about the importance of infrastructure and maintenance.

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We know that's true for all infrastructure, not just roads. It needs to be kept in the best condition possible if it is to serve us well.

This bill talks to the need for infrastructure planning to take a long-term view, the fact that we need to look not just at our present needs, but what our needs will be well into the future. I have no quarrel with that, none at all, but I would hope that it is already happening.

That investment in infrastructure is important to us in terms of how we live our lives daily. Those same reasons influence a company's decision to invest in Ontario. When they are trying to decide whether or not to set up shop or expand their operation here in Ontario or to go elsewhere, those companies look at many of the same factors that we look at as individuals. They want to know that they can move their goods around. They want to know that they can get supplies when they need them. They want to know that they have access to a stable, educated, healthy workforce, and of course, they would like to know that they can power their operations at a reasonable, competitive cost, but that is one thing that they are definitely finding increasingly hard to get due to the spiralling cost of electricity.

Investment in infrastructure is essential to the well-being of Ontario and its population. It improves our accessibility, our mobility and our productivity. It makes our lives better, and it makes Ontario a more attractive place for companies looking for a home. But investment in infrastructure goes beyond that and is a spur to our economy. It puts people to work, often in good-paying jobs, and those people spend the money they earn. They pay taxes. They buy goods and services from other businesses, supporting other jobs and offering a further boost to local economies.

To get back to my original point, yes, I agree that investment in infrastructure can lead to jobs and prosperity if it's done right.

Many in the construction industry have been raising concerns about the shift to bigger alternative finance and procurement projects, AFPs, more commonly known as P3 projects, and the bundling of traditionally financed projects. From this bill, it's hard to know if we're doing it right, because the bill doesn't get into many specifics. It talks a lot about regulations, about putting mechanisms in place to deal with concerns and not about what actually will be done.

One of the aspects of the P3 projects is that they are so big that they greatly limit who might bid for them. They can be worth billions of dollars, and they attract major international bidders to Ontario. The Construction and

Design Alliance of Ontario has voiced concerns that these big international companies, often from Spain in particular, are bidding with the support of subsidies from their own federal governments. They're squeezing out Ontario-based companies and, as a result, we're losing some of the positive effects of infrastructure investment that I mentioned earlier. Instead of staying in Ontario and stimulating our economy here, profits are being taken offshore and some of the job creation goes overseas. High-end service jobs at the head office along with the support and administrative functions that go with them—when you are talking about contracts in the billions, these can be a substantial loss to our local economies here in Ontario.

One of the main arguments made in favour of P3s is that they reduce public sector risk by passing the risk on to the private sector. This supposedly means that the potential for government cost overruns is reduced, but let's be clear here. This is a situation where a private business is assuming a portion of the risk in a given project. They don't assume the risk free of charge. That's not a gift that they give to the people of Ontario in return for the pleasure that they get from building things for us—no way. They're in business, and they're in it to make money. There's a cost to us for them assuming those risks. The problem is, we don't know what that cost is. We don't know if it's an accurate cost. The benefits of P3s are tied to there being a reasonable price for that transfer of risk, and we don't know if it's there.

P3s are being sold as decreasing the debt for future generations, but that assertion has to be seriously questioned. Auditor Generals regularly criticize the level of transparency and public reporting of the P3 projects they have looked at. That is cause for concern. Why is there an apparent lack of information coming from these projects? What is there to hide?

New Democrats have long had a problem with the government's P3 approach to infrastructure, and we hoped that maybe that was a bit displaced, and that this bill would deal with some of those issues that have been raised by various construction stakeholders—but it seems not.

Let me talk briefly about the issue of apprentices, which this bill touches on. As a province, we need to encourage people into the trades, to get an apprenticeship. As people start to decide what they are going to do with their lives, what they want to do when they grow up, they need to understand and respect the value of learning and becoming proficient at a trade. Our unions in the construction industry do a great job developing apprenticeships within the trades, but more needs to be done.

I'm really happy to see that this bill addresses the need to engage apprentices.

Here's what it says in section 8 of this bill: "The government shall require that such numbers of apprentices as may be prescribed are employed or engaged for the purposes of the construction or of the maintenance by the government of infrastructure assets." There is that problem again of the lack of detail that makes it difficult to

really pass judgment on this bill. How many apprentices are they talking about here? "Such numbers of apprentices as may be prescribed"—it would be good to have some idea of what the government is thinking here. How will they set that number? How will they ensure that those numbers are met?

As I said in the beginning, Speaker, this bill offers a grand title, but as they say, the proof is in the pudding, and this bill only offers the starter course.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I do not know where to begin with my two minutes, having had a chance not only to listen to the most recent contributions to this afternoon's debate, but to have had the chance, as well, to listen to some of the folks who came before, discussing this very important piece of legislation that our government, through the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, has brought forward, Bill 141.

When I said I don't know where to begin, Speaker, it's because I am taken aback, I am shocked, and I'm sure the people who are at home watching intently this afternoon from my community of Vaughan and from places like Scarborough–Guildwood and Oak Ridges–Markham and Etobicoke Centre and so many others are equally shocked to witness the spectacle that the opposition parties are putting on here this afternoon.

For 11 years, after years and years and years of governments of all stripes, including Conservatives and NDPers—the fact that those governments, when they were in power, did nothing to support the importance of infrastructure investments in this province. After 11 years of our government spending billions of dollars to put people back to work, to restore and revitalize crucial public infrastructure—to sit here in this place this afternoon and to witness the spectacle of the folks opposite telling us that this bill, Bill 141, is not ready for prime time, that it requires more details; to have watched the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Hudak, and members of his caucus vote against budget after budget after budget before they read it, before they looked at it—budgets that contained significant investments for infrastructure. To sit here today and listen to members from that caucus try to lecture us and tell the people of Ontario that there is somehow a new spin they can put on this, is just something that shocks me.

We need to pass this legislation. It's important to keep the economy going, and it's important so that we can continue to revitalize our crucial public infrastructure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a few questions and comments. I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for her comments.

I can't let the member for Vaughan get away with some of his remarks without saying how shocked I am that this government would orchestrate a press conference this afternoon with the Premier and that she would come out, make a short prepared statement, not take any

questions, with the bombshell that was released in the media today by the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen. I just think it's ridiculous that the Premier would even come out—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the member, pursuant to standing order 23(b), is nowhere even close to the subject being debated.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'd ask the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know, I appreciate that the new whip wants to make sure he earns his extra cash as a whip. He's very astute in the standing—

Mr. Bob Delanev: Point of order?

Mr. Steve Clark: I was giving you a compliment, before you stand up—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Mississauga-Cooksville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Streetsville.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. Pursuant to standing orders 23(h) and (i), the member for Leeds-Grenville can also not impute motive or make an allegation against a member. The member should really just speak to the bill; it's a lot—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'd ask the member for Leeds-Grenville if he would just—questions and comments to the bill.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm trying to compliment him that he understands the standing orders, and he's still taking up the majority of my time. I'm sorry, Speaker.

Again, I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her comments. I wish I had an additional two minutes to get some more comments on the record without frivolous interruptions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise after the member for Hamilton Mountain. She did a lot of research, and stood up here and delivered a really well-thought-out analysis of what this bill does and doesn't do.

Quite frankly, this bill does what a number of other Liberal bills have been doing lately. Every single day, a bill is announced—just about. If the Liberals sat for another 11 years, we couldn't debate them all. They really are more public relations announcements than they are bills. This particular public relations announcement, of course, is directed at a group that the government would hope to have on their side, were an election called.

I understand it's difficult. It's like discussing something when your house is on fire and not mentioning that the house is on fire. It's very difficult to discuss this bill that looks at infrastructure—and I mentioned the bill—

without being very much aware that a criminal investigation and serious allegations have been brought against the Premier of the province. The house is on fire, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Once again, a question and comment on the debate on Bill 141, which deals with infrastructure, has nothing to do with the subject that the member has been discussing. I would ask if the Speaker would enforce standing order 23(b).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for your point of order. I ask the member for Parkdale—High Park to restrict her comments to the bill that's in front of us.

Ms. Cheri **DiNovo:** I would ask the Speaker, though—I just lost about half of my time. With all due respect, sir, you should stop the clock when somebody stands up on a point of order.

Anyway, just very quickly, we've spoken about how we feel. The member from Hamilton Mountain did a wonderful job. I wish I had more time. Unfortunately, it was stolen from me, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to stand and make a few comments in relation to the remarks by the member from Hamilton Mountain. I'm glad to hear at least she had some positive comments, related especially to the apprenticeship issue.

Part of the reason why we need to get this bill to committee is so we can have that more fulsome discussion, and it would be very pleasant to see this debate completed on that kind of positive note.

When I look at Bill 141, I just think about what this means for the people in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, one of the fastest-growing areas of the province. Infrastructure is absolutely crucial. When I look at this, long-term planning, a 10-year plan—what could be more sensible? When I look at the guiding principles we have, the type of consultation with public sector organizations—so we can plan and we can prioritize and make sure that we address the needs of our constituents.

So when I look at this, it makes a great deal of sense. This type of provision of promoting design excellence in public works—wouldn't it be a wonderful thing, in this world-class part of the province, the greater Toronto area, to make sure that we not only have useful infrastructure, but potentially world-class infrastructure as well, whether it be in our universities, our hospitals—all of our public buildings? It's extremely important that those kinds of design principles are established as well.

I think it's about time we got this bill along the legislative pathway, and I urge all members of this House to support this very important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain, you have two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to thank the members from Vaughan, Leeds-Grenville, Parkdale-High Park and Oak Ridges-Markham for participating in the debate and having comments on what I had to say.

I have to say that we really have had a lot of bills come before us with very little substance, and this is certainly right on track with what is happening here in the last few months that we've been sitting. We're seeing bill after bill come before us, and they're all little bits and snippets of little things that have been talked about for years but there has been no action.

The member talked about the importance of infrastructure. Well, of course, we're all saying we know how important infrastructure is. I know that my municipality would love to have some more infrastructure dollars to deal with the major potholes we see happening. We're in almost a crisis for potholes in our municipality, and municipalities just don't have the ability to keep up. So when they talk about substance, maybe they're going to put more money into municipalities to help with infrastructure. I don't see that in this bill, Speaker.

I heard the member mention she was happy to hear that I talked about the apprenticeship issue. Yes, I did mention it, but I don't think she was listening. I was questioning what was actually being said in the bill about apprenticeships. We're questioning the numbers; we're questioning what they mean when they're talking about apprenticeships in this province.

This is something that we all know we have a problem to face. We know that money has to go into infrastructure. We know we can no longer watch the 11 years of crumbling continue to happen. We look forward to other bills coming forward, and hopefully they'll have extra snippets that will help improve this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to take part in the debate around Bill 141, the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

I would first like to commend the minister for bringing this forward. Well-developed infrastructure plays an important role in our economic potential. If planned and executed in a thoughtful and deliberate manner, balancing attention between designs and the inevitable bottom line, these projects can produce the greatest possible benefit for this and future generations.

I support the fundamentals set forward by the minister in Bill 141; namely, that Ontario has a need for long-term planning when it comes to this province's infrastructure. The proposed legislation would mandate that the government should publish, at the very least, a 10-year plan that lays out project infrastructure needs along with a strategy to meet those needs.

It's vital that we take the long view. These are large and technically complex projects that can also become politically and financially tangled. As someone who has spent the past year working very closely on this file, I think it's easy to appreciate why the minister has taken a keen interest in this particular matter.

I certainly am inclined to agree that infrastructure investment should be prioritized based on specific criteria. I would also agree with my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora that it would also be helpful for the people of this province to have a better understanding of the age and condition of all government-owned infrastructure assets.

The member from Durham, who is always a very eager listener and thoughtful speaker, also made a good point earlier in debate when he flagged the need for digital infrastructure in rural Ontario. This is another point where the bill before us would perhaps benefit a bit more in the way of definition. It is a notable dynamic between urban and rural communities, because the two have different assets and challenges, and it's not entirely clear how we will find common ground for even-handed planning. Once more, this is something that will hopefully be resolved to our shared satisfaction as this legislation moves forward.

Any conversation about strategic investment stands to be vastly improved by the availability of data, evidence and a formal framework for evaluation. It will help to reinforce the public's trust in government—something that has been substantially eroded in recent years.

This pool of transparent information should also help policy-makers, legislators and the public get a better sense of why decisions are being made and offer them the assurance that everyone is sharing in the benefits. Even if it doesn't remove the cause for complaint—and as long as roads produce potholes, that's likely to be the case—it should at least improve the quality of debate.

The more we can remove emotion and partisan calculation from the picture, the better. This, in turn, improves the odds that the ministry will be able to divorce its investments from the push-pull of the government of the day and make principled, cool-headed investments that best benefit the people of this province.

I know that this is something the government hinted at doing with Metrolinx: creating an independent agency capable of delivering big-picture, long-range thinking, developing a plan and coordinating what we have come to know as the Big Move. Of course, the ministry later brought out the choke chain and brought the agency to heel, which was formalized in the 2009 Metrolinx Act. Even the best intentions can sometimes meet with unforeseen complications somewhere down the line.

Had the current minister been in his role all those years ago, maybe we would be reviewing a 10-year plan rather than talking about the need for legislation to get us to the starting blocks. This hints at one of the soft spots in Bill 141. The proposed legislation does not appear to mandate any specific measures that would make possible the implementation of the valuable principles it seeks to champion.

Speaker, Ontario Liberals had three ambitious pieces of legislation passed in 2006, three bills that arguably dovetailed with one another but which have each been set adrift from their early ambitions to varying degrees. The

bills are the Metrolinx Act, the Greenbelt Act and the Places to Grow Act. It's easy to see the three of these as components of a single concept which is thematically similar to Bill 141—namely, they were brought forward out of a concern to be proactive about the demographic changes that we as a province will face in the future and which will dramatically alter the way we think, work, live and play in Ontario. There is a huge number of infrastructure issues throughout Ontario, and most, if not all, municipalities are facing a huge infrastructure deficit that needs to be addressed, and addressed substantively going forward.

This bill sets out a three-year timeline to even get to a 10-year plan, which may be understandable. Relative to the scale of an undertaking such as the Big Move, what is being proposed here seems much more ambitious, if also open-ended and light on details. Where rapid transit planning was concentrated in the GTHA, public infrastructure is, of course, province-wide. Those living outside of the GTHA will rightly want to know that their demands are being taken as seriously as those elsewhere.

The minister is to be commended for looking beyond the here and now. Whether history will bear out his hopes that Bill 141 will only be fully appreciated 15 or 20 years down the road remains to be seen. I do know that the minister is not afraid to be blue-sky at the expense of practical detail in the legislation before us this afternoon. I also know that the minister's passion on this portfolio is rooted in his love of infrastructure and architectural history—except maybe for the Eaton's on Portage.

The minister, in the past, has expressed his admiration for one of his distant Liberal forebears in cabinet, highway builder and prominent Hamiltonian T.B. McQuesten, who was responsible for infrastructure such as the QEW during his time in office, as well as the creation of the Royal Botanical Gardens after he retired.

McQuesten lived in a changing time, but he also lived in a somewhat different era from ours, which might have helped speed the process. There was not as much need to workshop ideas or have extensive public consultation, not as much need for endless panels and endless reams of consultants' reports. There were more real town halls and fewer cautious pollsters measuring the public's mood before politicians were willing to take a stand.

The old way managed to leave us with legacy structures of impressive stature, in part because government showed leadership. Society as a whole also lived in a more compact footprint. Society's population had more clearly defined limits, and the public trusted those in authority to do the right thing by them.

Where we were once a population defined by obedience and faith, we are now a society defined by freedom and skepticism and small print. Consider the girth of the building code today, or the maze of zoning regulations. Along with this, think of the relative costs and availability of materials, and the abundance of skilled labour and specialized trades.

In short, I am not convinced that the difference between the so-called "golden age" and today is simply a

matter of standards and collective self-esteem. Can government invest valuable infrastructure dollars more wisely? Absolutely. Will that kind of approach produce better results for the people of Ontario? No doubt. Will the road forward be smooth or straightforward? That is more doubtful. All the same, this is an important conversation to have, because the long-term viability of our communities, and the health and stability of our economy, rides on the outcome of this.

Again, Speaker, I am encouraged to see the minister bringing this bill forward. I am in favour of the basic premises, but there are obviously a number of things that need to be answered.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Clearly the Conservative Party and the member from Burlington support this bill, as do we. I did say to the minister—I'll repeat it—that this is fluff. This is a feel-good kind of politics, particularly for the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, before an election. It's all good.

I outlined point by point how, for the most part, I have absolutely no disagreement with these things. We should send it to committee for discussion and bring a number of these players to speak to it. I'm convinced that the majority of these people who are affected in some small way will come and say, "This is great, Minister," and then hope for the best.

The real debate for me, while the minister is here, is around the P3s—public-private partnerships. The real debate is around the Liberal name for this, and that is "alternative financing procurement." The debate is around whether it works best for taxpayers.

I know that the minister and his Premier are committed to P3s. I quoted the Premier on this, and quoted how gung-ho they are, because they lead Canada in P3 projects. They lead Canada, and they're happy about it.

This bill is an attempt to bring in the critics, to say, "We're listening to you. We can make it better," which is the comment that the minster has made in committee, which I'm assuming he'll make here as well in a two-minute response—and that is to say, "We can do P3s better, and we're learning." I'm saying, if you're learning, make it better through the public procurement process, which makes it cheaper and more cost-effective for the public than the P3s.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend the member for Burlington on a thoughtful speech. I sometimes get frustrated with members opposite, because their reading of the economic record of this government relative to any other jurisdiction, I think, is somewhat unreal and inaccurate.

But I say that this is one place where we agree, as a matter of fact. Where the official opposition and the government agree is on alternative financing. The member points back to the Liberal governments of Hepburn and McQuesten. You could go right up to George Drew, the last Premier of Ontario—Premier Drew is one of my favourites, because he spent 2% of the GDP—it was the last time we spent the equivalent of \$15 billion worth of infrastructure, which is 2% today. The equivalent amount was under Premier Drew. Premier Drew left office, if you go out there, in about 1969, which was the last time we actually had a full-time—there's no government of any party, until about four years ago, that actually made that level of expenditure. Maybe later people from the third party could explain to those of us in the Liberal and Conservative caucuses why they have such a problem with AFP, which is so accepted in Britain. The Labour government in the UK brought it forward.

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I'll give you one example. The member for Trinity—Spadina has a lot of teachers who live in his constituency. The difference is, there's this thing called the teachers' pension fund. The teachers' pension fund owns high-speed rail and the rapid transit system in London. As a matter of fact, it's managed by a Canadian, Michael Schabas. It's all Canadian money. So what's happening is, the pension funds of Ontario teachers and others and public sector workers are building high-speed rapid transit and subways in the UK, but not in the communities they live in. Mr. Speaker, we think AFP is a good model to get pension dollars working here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is a pleasure to get up and make some comments on the member from Burlington. I know that she's having a tough time, struggling to be here today. I commend you for your perseverance despite your illness.

But I echo some of her concerns, and certainly this bill attempts to address some real concerns that there are with infrastructure. I know, coming from a municipal background myself, that there are some severe infrastructure deficits that municipalities are struggling with. Anything the government does to address some the infrastructure woes that we have is welcomed. Certainly, creative ways to do it are probably the only way we can get through this without breaking the bank.

Whenever we can do a public-private partnership of any sort, by any name, to help mitigate some of the capital costs and to help finance these in a creative way, we all win. I think the public actually wins in this situation. Sometimes we get it done more efficiently and faster, and certainly with a whole different style of doing things. It takes a little bit of courage to be able to have that sort of creativity.

I'd like to see more of that in this bill. It's a pretty broad bill, I think, that maybe is a good way to get the foot in the door and maybe open the door for some other more substantive change that we'd like to see in the future, because it is broad. It does leave a lot of questions out there.

I do share the member's concerns about long-term viability of infrastructure. It is critically important that we have an infrastructure in Ontario throughout the prov-

ince that works for everybody and is maintained in a way that doesn't jeopardize its future. In other words, it's one thing to build it; it's another thing to make sure that it's maintained over a period of time. Because we have the real issue, like I said, with municipalities and the province making sure that we do keep it maintained.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise in this House and comment on the remarks from the member from Burlington. I see her often when I'm having breakfast in the morning. She's a very early riser—a very sunny personality.

I enjoyed the member's remarks, but I have some criticism for her caucus members, because she can't be feeling that well today, and that she has to work today feeling as rough as she does—she deserves a medal for that, because she's not up to her normal self.

But she did bring forward some very balanced remarks, and I don't think anyone in this House is—we have different levels of how effective we think this bill is, but I think we are all in favour of this bill going forward. We all know how important infrastructure is to the whole province. The member from Burlington brought forward that there are different levels and different expectations from infrastructure throughout the province, as there should be. You won't hear people in my riding talking about a subway, because there's just not enough people. But people in my riding also have definite needs for infrastructure, and that's going to be one of the hardest things, and has been traditionally one of the hardest things, to balance and will continue to be so.

So, in closing, thank you for your remarks. You really toughed it out to be here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Burlington, you have the honour of two min-

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the member from Trinity—Spadina, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation and the member from Barrie, and for the kind, sweet words from the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

As I mentioned earlier, and as hardly needs to be mentioned, Ontario's infrastructure deficit is very real, relatable and, of course, non-partisan. I doubt there is a member in this Legislature whose offices here at Queen's Park and in their riding are not bombarded with concerns about the problems that loom today as well as those that lurk just over the horizon. As such, a piece of legislation such as Bill 141 is probably destined to find a certain amount of traction and a room full of receptive ears.

There seems to be fairly broad agreement on the need for action on this file. There is also an eagerness for government to map a way forward that not only takes into account the best interests of all people and communities in Ontario, but also shows itself to be doing so fairly and evenly.

The promise of transparent decision-making that is as free as humanly possible from political influence is the ideal. Can this government deliver on that promise? That remains to be seen. It will certainly be no small task. It will first have to rebuild the public trust left shattered by scandal after scandal. The minister may want to conserve his energy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour once again to be able to rise in this House and put some words on the record regarding Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013—that's certainly a mouthful. Before I really begin my remarks, I'd like to commend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, because every time I've been in the House to discuss or listen to remarks on this bill, usually he's here. I think that's a very important thing, because it's good to hear from the minister. I think that's a good thing.

Having said that, he made a remark today in private members' public business regarding the importance of education. Specifically, he mentioned agricultural education and how they want to bring more education out to the regions. I hope that those remarks help Kemptville College. As a farmer, Kemptville College is very important, and I hope that you are on their side, advocating for them, because you said that agricultural education is important, and it truly is, and that's a place where it's happening.

But let's get back to the bill. I'm just going to go through some of the things the bill is supposed to do and provide some comments. All broader public sector entities must consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles in making decisions related to infrastructure. These principles include things like taking a long-term view, and decision-makers must take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of demographic and economic trends in Ontario. That makes sense. Taking a long-term view-I think all municipalities would understand that, because they have to take a long-term view. Business people would understand that; homeowners, everyone would understand that. Instead of looking at the province's infrastructure, if you're looking at a house, you've got to think that your roof is probably going to need to be fixed or replaced in 10 years. That's what this bill is talking about, only in a much broader scope.

Here again, the Minister of Infrastructure must periodically develop a 10-year infrastructure plan providing a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs, and each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public—once again, good, common-sense stuff. We should have a 10-year plan. I used to be on a hospital board; they had a 10-year plan. That's common-sense, bread-and-butter stuff. It gets a little bit touchier here, because they need three years to develop it.

Although maybe we don't have an official 10-year plan now, we have a long-term energy plan. We have lots of long-term plans. It's a big job, but I'm not sure—the government has been governing this province for 11

years. It's going to take three years to develop a plan. I don't know how big of an issue it is, but it's an issue.

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Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's almost ready.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay. Then why would it have to have in legislation that you need three years to develop it, Minister?

The next one is that the government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets. Criteria include whether the project fits in with municipal plans, etc. Again, that's bread-and-butter stuff the minister must consider. That's good long-term planning, right? For long-term planning, you have long-term objectives. Those objectives would be pretty clear.

But here's one part in the bill where I have a problem, or I think our party has a problem, but I have a specific problem with it. Let's see if we can find it in the bill right here. It's under "additional criteria."

"The minister may, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, develop and issue additional criteria required to be considered under subsection (1)," and, "before issuing criteria under subsection (2), the minister shall consult, in the manner that the minister considers appropriate, with any persons or bodies that the minister considers appropriate given the content of the proposed criteria, including any potentially affected ministries, crown agencies or broader public sector entities."

Once again, that sounds okay, but if you really think that through, at any time in the planning process, the minister, for whatever reason, could change the rules. He could say, "We're five years in and we're developing new criteria." All the consultation—it doesn't matter, or they pick who does the consultation.

I'll give an example of where that has happened in the past. On another planning process, Places to Grow and, basically, the northern growth plan—and if you're aware of the northern growth plan, I believe it's a 25-year plan for the growth of northern Ontario. It went for four years of consultation, and northerners took this very seriously. I was president of the Federation of Agriculture and went to Thunder Bay to speak to this. We took this very seriously. In the preamble of the plan from 2011:

"Transportation infrastructure, including roads, rail, air, and waterways, connects communities within the north to one another and to the rest of the world. Northerners often need to travel great distances to access work, education and health services. Northern businesses need to be able to reach markets around the world. For northern Ontario's remote communities, winter roads and air transportation are vital lifelines for fuel, food, basic amenities and access to education, health and emergency services. An integrated, long-term transportation plan is needed to maintain and enhance the north's transportation infrastructure and to improve connectivity among" the people of the north.

Great. In 2011, after years of consultation, you came up with that?

What happened in 2012? They announced the divestment of ONTC without talking to anyone. Basically, they threw the plan out the window, and the very same thing could be done with Bill 141, based on this. We could go through this whole consultation process, the 10-year plan, and at any point—I'll give you another example, Speaker. The long-term energy plan: How many gas plants were built? This is a long-term plan. Nineteen? Twenty? Two, at the very last minute—this wasn't part of any long-term energy plan-were moved. They were moved for political reasons, and we all know what's happening with that. The very same thing could happen here. We have this great 10-year plan. We could all spend years developing it, and for whatever reason, the minister of the day could, if you take this bill seriously—because he or she also picks the people they consult with. If you take the gas plants that were moved, we don't know who the minister or the Premier consulted with, but the decision was made, and they are obviously not very proud of that decision. They were spending a lot of time covering it up. But the same thing could happen with this bill.

Some of my colleagues have spent a lot of time talking about the P3, and that's very important. But this is, to me, equally important because that clause gives the minister of the day almost unlimited power. That throws the planning process out the window because that brings it right back to what the planning process is trying to avoid: It brings it back to the political process. At the end of the day, if the minister picks the players, if the minister picks the criteria, if the minister picks when the decision is made, then that makes the whole planning process suspect. In this day and age of how untrusting people are of government, with good reason, I think that's a part of the bill that we have to look at very, very closely, because it renders the rest of the bill basically moot-that's the first time I've used that word in the Legislature. If the minister can change at any time, with this part in the bill—the minister can change the criteria at will. He can change the rules of the game at any time. With those cases, there are going to be people and places that aren't going to be treated correctly.

The whole goal of the plan is to make sure that the infrastructure is not divided evenly, but equitably. If you can change the rules in the middle of the game, you lose that equilibrium, and we're very concerned about that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I just want to speak briefly to this. I want to make three points having to do with Bill 141.

First of all, there are three really important elements in my mind.

One, it contemplates long-term planning, and by that I mean that the Minister of Infrastructure is going to table a 10-year plan. That 10-year plan is going to be tabled within three years of the legislation coming into effect, and then subsequent long-term plans are going to be filed or updated every five years, so we're in it for the long game.

Second, the bill lays out certain guiding principles, and I want to just go through a few of those guiding principles:

(1) the demographic and economic trends and fiscal

plans;

(2) advancing the use of new technologies—because that's important in this day and age—practices and innovative partnerships; and

(3) protecting the environment.

The third point, in my view, which is very important, is what I'll call project prioritization. Long-term infrastructure planning: In addition to reaching out a long way for the planning of it, you've got to have some priorities. When you go through the bill, here are the four priorities:

(1) the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horse-

shoe;

(2) the transportation plans under the Metrolinx Act, 2006;

(3) the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan;

(4) the municipal water sustainability plans under the

Water Opportunities Act.

This bill is thought out. It has the component of longterm planning, it has the component of guiding principles, and it has the component of prioritizing what we need. In this way, Ontario will get the best infrastructure, on a long-term and ongoing basis, that we can possibly develop.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: As usual, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane always brings to bear how he genuinely feels about the world. He was so polite, talking about the member from Burlington, who was ill this afternoon and stayed to comment on this bill while the Minister of Transportation was here.

I was surprised at the minister's response to the member from Burlington, that he didn't apologize. I don't like to be mean, but I don't think he was very nice to the

member from Burlington the other day.

I'll go on to comment on the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who also remarked on how the member from Burlington wasn't up to her normal high standard. When he talked about the issues within his riding, that's where the tire hit the road or the pavement, so to speak, in the lingo of this particular bill, Bill 141. I can only say this: I pretty much endorse his concerns, but his solutions remain questionable.

They don't realize that there's no—in Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne's Ontario, they have run out of money. They have doubled the debt. The deficit's over the hill. They have squandered billions and billions of dollars. Now we find out there are 27 disk drives that may have been part of the—I don't know. I'll go back to that.

1700

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: See? They don't want—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Mississauga–Cooksville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Try again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Stop the clock.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Streetsville. Thank you very much, Speaker.

Pursuant to standing order 23(b), I would ask that the Speaker be a little more vigilant in enforcing it and ensuring that members either speaking or providing comments stay on the topic of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'll ask the member to speak to the bill, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. Now, I just say, in getting to the specifics of Bill 141, that, earlier today, this afternoon, our new member from Thornhill, Mrs. Martow, had a private member's bill which was endorsed in the House. It very much relates to Bill 141 because what it was for was to establish an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services in the province of Ontario. I would ask in this public forum that he do the right thing: try to build relationships here. Let's seal this relationship and adopt Bill 181.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A pleasure always to follow the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—always does his homework. I think what is most moving about his speeches on whatever topic is, his focus on the north, and rightly so. He brought forward the fact that although we, for example, in Parkdale–High Park are very concerned about the air-rail link and its electrification, they in the north are concerned about having a train at all. So again, we go back to the unevenness of the infrastructure spending, perhaps.

The other issue he brought forward, and I believe he's the first person to do so in this debate, was the incredible power that this bill vests with the minister. Of course, we should all be concerned about that. If indeed we want transparent government and we want democratic government, we've got to have checks and balances. Vesting in one person a great deal of power is never a good thing. We do it way too much in our parliamentary system, in my humble estimation, and anything that does it even more is not warranted. So I thank him for that, because that was a new insight that he brought to the table, for sure.

Certainly, this is the kind of thing we should be looking at in committee. As we've said before, we as New Democrats are supportive of moving this forward to committee. I say again, it's going to take another 11 years, it seems to me, to work our way through all the bills that the government has introduced, but so be it. They seem to be, to me, very short on substance and very long on public relations value, but I'll take my own time to talk about that.

Again, thanks to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. Thanks for doing his homework, and thanks for always being a stalwart when it comes to defending the interests of northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm just going to make a very obvious observation. I think there's certainly a consensus here in the Legislature that this is an important bill and that it is worth having further consideration at committee. We have had many, many hours of debate, and I would urge members that perhaps it's time to wrap up that debate and send it to committee so that we can go on to the next stage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member from Durham, my colleague from Parkdale–High Park and the government House leader.

I would like to start with the comments from the government House leader and from my colleague from Parkdale–High Park. I think over today we have uncovered a few issues that haven't been uncovered in this House, and, yes, they should be looked at in committee. But on an issue like this—infrastructure is one of the most important issues in this province—I don't think that we can shortchange it for discussion in this House.

I would like to come back to, and it's very important, the part about the planning process. Once you develop a good process and once you develop a good plan, you have to stick to the plan. If you're making a fence and you have to move one post a foot over, that's not the end of the world in the farm world, but if you have to move the whole fence because you planned it wrong, that costs you a lot of money.

It's the same here. We're going to use the example of the long-term energy plan. If all of a sudden at the end of the game, for reasons that have nothing to do with energy production, you cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$1 billion—that same thing could happen with this because if you look at the criteria, you can change the rules in the middle of the game or at the end of the game and cost the taxpayers, who work very hard, cost families, who work very hard for their living, and because of too much power in certain places, their money is wantonly spent. Especially when you're talking about bills that have big names about long-term plans, you'd better make sure that the regs are in place and that they're actually done correctly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've actually read quite a bit of this bill. I share some concerns that have been expressed earlier, but there's actually something I want to touch on to do with infrastructure in rural Ontario.

I, like the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, come from a rural area. We both have farming back-

grounds. There are some issues in rural Ontario that are being slowly addressed, but they're not being addressed at the speed we think they should be addressed.

I looked at the definitions in this bill. One of them is the definition of infrastructure. If you look at section what section is it here? It says that "infrastructure" is any prescribed physical structure or facility.

Recently, I was at a meeting in Owen Sound, in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—a very nice museum they have up there. We had a meeting with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus. Their concerns are some of the concerns that have been expressed here today. Certainly the Connecting Link Program was a big topic, and why they would pull the plug on that and do it without much consultation; it just happened. It surprised everybody, and we're still having issues with that.

I can understand some of the angst with this bill, that a government can do things without consultation, although the bill speaks of planning 10 years ahead or so for infrastructure projects.

One of the things that came out of this meeting in Owen Sound was about infrastructure for high-speed broadband. We're at a disadvantage in rural Ontario because of the space and whatever else, although some companies are trying to address that. We live in a society where we can get information just like that, and I think you know that, Speaker. In rural Ontario, one of the things that happens in our small towns—they usually have one big business that employs a lot of people. As we've seen what has happened in Leamington, especially when Heinz was closed down, although some of the jobs are being brought back—it devastated that town.

What we are trying to do in rural Ontario is not only trying to keep the business we have, but also entice business to come to rural Ontario. One of the reasons they cite as maybe not wanting to move to these areas is connectivity. They don't have the high-speed Internet that they require to run their businesses.

Our students are also faced with this issue. They don't have equal access to these resources versus people in urban areas. We also have a problem with school enrolment that continue to decline, so rural schools are closing.

1710

We believe that if we can keep industry in rural Ontario and make people want to come to Ontario, more kids' schools will have less of a chance of closing. However, our population is shrinking in rural Ontario. That's a fact. That is what's going on right now, and it's getting very difficult to keep community centres open, to keep libraries open and the like. Also, the population of those who live in rural Ontario—our average age is going up, which is another concern; we aren't replacing them with younger folks.

The western wardens came up with an idea, in consultation with some consultants, of strategies to reverse the downward trends that I just spoke of. This does a couple of things. They want to position rural areas to prosper socially and economically. They want to press upper

levels of government to intervene and provide resources. It's going to take a tremendous amount of money to put the infrastructure in place for a broadband system to service rural Ontario, but I think the benefits are there, if it's planned out properly. There are companies that are interested to get involved in it that will certainly help our rural people.

Let me tell you about grain farmers, for instance. They make their money, a lot of the time, trading in the Chicago futures market. You've got to have that pretty quickly, because those prices could change in a hurry. Our beef farmers and hog farmers trade on the same market, so we have to have access to high-speed Internet services. Now, it's not bad-I mean, it's coming, but sometimes it's not reliable. Some of the systems used are systems that use satellite dishes or towers. However, you get a good ice storm or something that comes along—and by the way, we had two ice storms out my way this year, not just one, and unfortunately the government is not going to help us out with the cost of that. But anyways, when things like this come along, when snow gets on the satellite dishes, it blocks out the signals so there are companies out there that are working on putting fibre optics in. This is something that I would hope—and again, if you look at the bill, it's difficult to tell just exactly where the government's definition of infrastructure is, so I just thought I'd take the opportunity to talk about broadband in rural Ontario.

Last night—and those of you who don't know about this-we had a really close hockey game where we took on the dental association. One of the first things we didand I see one of our star goalies sitting across the way over there-

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: But, anyway, what I'm getting at, the reason I brought this up, is because when we walked into that arena, and as part of the arena's infrastructure-if I could be so bold to put it this way-we looked for defibrillators. What do people look for in arenas now, especially people of our rather mature age? We look for things like defibrillators. We also made sure that somebody was around who could read the instructions and understand them in case one of our players ran out of air, or gas, or however you want to put it. But that's something people depend on. That's what people expect at these arenas, stuff like that. People in rural Ontario would certainly want to make sure that the government knows their expectations; broadband would be one of them. Certainly, maintaining our roads and bridges that we have in rural Ontario is very important to us.

A community in Wellington North just found out about a bridge on the Connecting Link. Now they have to come up with fixing this thing. They don't have the resources to do that. The government has put it on their plate, the municipal plate, but they retain ownership of this bridge, so they are asking them to pay for something they don't own. Now, I wish the government would buy me a car that way. I'll buy the car if they would pay for it. That would be kind of great.

But this is what's going on with the change in the Connecting Link system right now, that rural Ontarians—in fact, all Ontarians—are getting asked to pay for something they don't own, and that's not fair. Now, if the government would say to the municipality, "We'll trade assets or whatever, so that you can own these things," that may be a different story, but they are not going that far, and we don't feel that's fair.

By the way, Speaker, after we found our defibrillators—we only lost by one goal, in case anybody was interested, a 7-to-6 score.

I do believe that with the proper implementation of some of these things, certainly rural Ontario would be more successful. It would help it be more successful in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As I see it, the member for Perth–Wellington and the Conservative caucus have two options. One is to publicly stand up and give the Liberals a big hug, but it has to be sincere. You just can't play and pretend. So you all get up and you do this. Or the other option, which is equally good, is to stand up individually and collectively and say, "Look, we started the P3s. We're better than you, and you're copycats."

This is how I see this thing unfolding, because you have to stand out, you have to distinguish yourself a little bit, and you have to say, "We were the party that started this, and the Liberals merely copy what we've done." You have to tell them, "Look, we're tired of Tories in a

hurry. We're the real Tories."

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, you are.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm speaking for the Liberals. "And when the Liberals take our stuff and make it their own, we just don't like it." That is how I see it. I could be wrong, and maybe the member from Perth-Wellington has a third option that I didn't think about. But those are the only two that I could come up with, and it would have been nice to have had a third option.

So to repeat, the first is to hug them and say, "We are brothers and sisters," or "We're cousins," or simply say, "You guys are just not good Tories; we are the real Tories. Step aside, and we'll do it for you." Those are the two options.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I listened to the debate on the proposed Bill 141 very attentively. It's very interesting that the member from Perth-Wellington injected some conversation about the hockey game, and then my colleague from Trinity-Spadina talked about love.

Anyway, at the end of the day, I hear that the opposition party does support P3 and the proposed bill. I also know that during the NDP government they also had P3. Unfortunately, it wasn't that successful.

So let's get on with this particular bill and have further conversation in the committee, because at the end of the day, the fine-tuning or the discussion, getting the community involved and having this conversation, is better done through the committee. I encourage everybody to move this on to the committee so we can have further conversation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You know, the longer this bill is debated, the more I find myself wondering what the purpose of this bill is. I mean, we're going to have this glorious plan—of course, we're not going to do anything for three years. The province is in desperate shape, and we're not going to do anything for three years, but they're going to have this glorious plan.

If we've never had this plan before, how did the 401 ever get built? And the 400, the 404, the 406, the 402? How did those things ever get built without this plan? How did all the colleges and universities, and the buildings on those campuses, get built without this plan?

1720

They got built by a government who planned these things themselves, who looked to the future, did their job, rolled up their sleeves and did what was necessary to make Ontario the great province that it once was. This is like forming a new panel.

Brock University wants a new building; it desperately needs a new building. They have 40% of the cash. They've had it for a year and a half. Has this government done anything? Not a thing. They're going to stand to lose some of that money if this government doesn't do something, and this government has done nothing.

Now it needs a new piece of legislation to make this go forward. I'm beginning to think that this whole bill is just designed so that you can politicize the infrastructure of this province, you can direct where it will go: to the seats you want to win, and the seats you now hold. I'm beginning to think that this bill is a bad piece of legislation.

The House leader talked about how we've maybe debated this bill enough. Well, we've debated this bill for about nine hours, and I'm starting to change my mind on this bill. I'm starting to see through where the Liberals are going with this bill. I'm starting to think it's a bad bill to support. That's what I'm starting to think, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the member from Halton—I know we are speaking to the comments from the member from Perth—Wellington, but just because he stood up—I'm not so sure that it's a bad bill, but it is a public relations announcement. It's a fluff bill—let's be serious—and we know what it's designed to do. It's designed to appease some stakeholders in the run-up to an election.

However, there are some points to be made about infrastructure. I think this debate is a chance to make them. The member from Scarborough–Agincourt and other Liberals have stood up in this House and basically argued against the parliamentary system. The parliamentary system is a system of debate, and the member from Halton raised a good point: In the process of debate, you actually learn something.

The process is that you're supposed to listen from the government side, and we're supposed to put forward ideas that you listen to, which is what I believe we are doing—both parties on this side. That's the process. It's called democracy. It's of course a lot faster for a minister just to run off and do things without ever checking with the opposition at all; I don't think that's the kind of government we want.

She also mentioned the government of Bob Rae. I always find this strange, that the Liberal government constantly refers to the government under their leader Bob Rae in a negative way. I really have had no dealings with the man myself, but he was the leader of the federal Liberal Party. To denigrate him the way they do constantly is, I think, passing strange. I would simply say that.

Getting back to the infrastructure issue, which I will be speaking to in-depth—or at least for 10 minutes—in a short while: There are lots of things to be said about infrastructure, and lots of infrastructure that hasn't been done. For example, let me just throw this word out there: housing. Wow. This is a government that has completely abandoned the housing file.

There's more on that to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The

member for Perth–Wellington, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to the comments from the members from Trinity–Spadina, Scarborough–Agincourt, Halton, and Parkdale–High Park. I would just like to address some of the comments that were made. If there's anybody that's had a group hug with the government over here, it's been the third party. They've been doing that for two and a half years—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If you've had a group hug with the Liberals, check your wallet.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes. But anyway, to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, this is the way we do things. We debate things in this House. That's the way our system is set up. I understand that it could probably get pretty tedious, because you people just don't really want to be here on a Thursday afternoon, but that's the way things are done here.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That's just the way, and I appreciate the comments from the member from Parkdale—High Park for bringing that up. This is the parliamentary system. This is the way things work.

There are different issues all over the province that have to be addressed. It's too bad that this bill wasn't more specific because I agree with the member from Halton: What is the purpose of this bill? I wonder what the purpose is. Is it something to distract us from things that are going wrong with this present government right now, which they don't want to be out in the press or whatever? I don't know. That's the issue with this bill. That's why I brought up the infrastructure business with broadband, because, in the definitions, you could probably put anything under the infrastructure label.

It's very broad. It's not a bill that should draw a lot of attention to it. It should, but it doesn't. Anyway, it's going to be interesting to see how this bill progresses in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure, and it's always a privilege, to stand in this House to speak on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park. We're speaking about a bill on infrastructure by, of course, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. It's too bad he's left, because I wanted to give him a bit of a shoutout around another bill that he brought in, which is the drive-safe bill, and for including my bill in that, the onemetre rule. So I wanted to thank him for that. I haven't had a chance to do so.

I wanted to go back to a time when I was first elected, almost eight years ago, three elections ago—astounding—when a group came to my office. They were the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. At the time, I was the housing critic and also the infrastructure critic. They made a very good point, and it became a kind of metaphor for me of the problems with political process, certainly under this current government. They said, "You know, there's always money to fix the pothole or, God forbid, the sinkhole, but there's never money to reconstruct the sewer system."

In a sense, that's what's needed. Politicians and governments tend to think in election cycles and not in terms of a long-range plan of what's best for the province of Ontario and Ontarians. That's the problem. The problem is, it's the quick hit. It's the ribbon-cutting of today and not the long-term problem of tomorrow for a couple of good reasons, but for one very good reason: It costs more to do that, to do the hard infrastructure work of, part by part, replacing all the sewers, for example, in a city the size of Toronto. It's far easier, even if it's more expensive in the long run, to fix the pothole.

That's, I think, the message of the bill. I don't think it's going to happen because of the message of the bill, but it is the message of the bill: long-term planning.

I have a very good example of the problem in my own riding, in Parkdale–High Park, and that is the air-rail link. Here you have a train that runs from Pearson down to Union Station that, because they want to get it done fast, by the Pan Am Games, is going to be diesel.

Despite boards of health and environmental assessments to the contrary, it's still plowing ahead as a diesel train that will be running 10 times the number of trains in 2015. As much as we have tabled a motion—our member from Davenport tabled a bill just recently, "Please make it electric by 2015"—the government will have none of it. Why? It costs more in the short term. But in the long term, my argument, which I hope the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure agrees with, would be that it actually costs more to think short term than it does if you actually think long term and do it right the first time.

I guess that's why I find this somewhat odd. The same Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure who wants us to think long term, 10-year plans, is going ahead—and, by the way, Metrolinx is mentioned here-with the airrail link with such a short-term mentality. Not only is it diesel with a promise of maybe electrification someday, but it also doesn't stop so it can serve the people of the ridings it passes through. It's literally a kind of taxi service for wealthy tourists to get them from Pearson to Union Station and back. But what about all the people who desperately need transportation in the city of Toronto, who would love to use that? Why doesn't it segue into the TTC structure and actually carry people to work and back for an affordable price? Why doesn't it do that? Short-term thinking. You know, short-term thinking, the immediate political hit; in this case, I think they are taking the hit—but short-term thinking instead of longterm planning.

1730

We've already talked about the problems with privatepublic partnerships, the so-called three Ps, or whatever you want to call them.

By the way, just to the point, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure talked about the Labour government. Well, you know, my friend from Trinity-Spadina here pointed out to me that the Labour government is running away from P3s.

If you want to know what those who advocate public-private partnerships think about the reality behind them—I think this is a very good quote. This is from Larry Blain, president of Partnerships BC. They want more public-private partnerships, and he says, "Public sector comparators"—remember, of course, the sell is, "We can do it more efficiently; we can do it cheaper in the short run. You don't have to run the risk; we'll take the risk. It's all wonderful." That's how sales work. It's always wonderful. This is a quote about how he really thinks. He says, "Public sector comparators won't do you much good anyway, because I can make the public sector comparator as bad as we want to, in order to make the private sector look good."

There you have it. There you have somebody being honest. You can't fault him for that. He's being honest, and we all know this is sales. This is sales.

What, in fact, we find—and if we think only for a few minutes about this, we will know that people don't go into business if they don't plan on making a profit. The question is, where does the profit come from? Does it come from the public purse or does it come from the market? The problem is with public and private partnerships, which is what the Liberals are doing and which is what the Conservatives did—if they would have their druthers, they would privatize everything because, again, it's short-term thinking, the quick hit. "We'll get money if we sell off this asset or sell off that asset. We'll sell off the LCBO." That's my friends to the right here—a quick hit but a long-term loss.

Unfortunately, this government feels the same way. Sell off assets, even if they make you money, because a quick hit now gets you through the next election cycle. This is, I would say, very cynical.

To again come back to my example, which I think is the most telling one, of the air-rail link—and it certainly means a great deal to people in my riding, not only my riding but Davenport, Trinity-Spadina, York South-Weston. The same minister, who refuses to even consider electrifying by the time the Pan Am Games start, and perhaps, yes, the little bit of extra money that it takes, would rather see the quick hit. Get those trains running, even if the athletes, by the way, don't take them; they'll be taking other means of transportation. Get it done fast. Again, who cares? It's cheaper this way, and yet, longterm, it's going to cost a great deal more, not only to electrify because you have to do the same thing twice, but in health—the health of our children who have the smallest lungs breathe in the diesel in the worst way. There are 65 schools along that air-rail link.

So the same minister who is doing that short-term thinking—fast, bang, political thought—is bringing in this bill. It leads one to be a little cynical—one can't help it—particularly when it's not a bill of great substance. Of course, it's also delivered in such a crowded field of Liberal bills being announced every day that, even with another 11 years, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't get through them all. But the Liberal answer, "Oh, let's just not debate anything."

I mean, come on. "Let's just send everything to committee right now." What? That's what we are paid to do. We are elected to come here to actually question what they do. There's a lot of questioning of what they do going on right now. I might mention a certain matter. I'm sure somebody will stand up if I mention it. But anyway, I won't go there. There's a lot of questioning going on right now, but that's our job—our job is to hold them to account, and you hold them to account through debate. That's called democracy. So we are not going to just send every bill to committee without debate. That's not what we do, and that's not what we were elected to do.

But let's use as an example the air-rail link: Let's do it right the first time. Let's put that little bit more thought and a little more money into it to save money in the long run. Let's think 10 years about the air-rail link, I would say to my friend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Let's use this as an example. Let's electrify by 2015. Let's do it right the first time. Let's get it done, and then I will have more belief in the substance of this bill that calls for long-term infrastructure thought; then I'll take it seriously.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great privilege to speak to Bill 141 today, but before I do that, I would like to introduce my good friend Shafiq Qaadri Jr., who's joining us here today in the Legislature.

I think there's some merit in looking at our infrastructure needs here in the province of Ontario over a long period of time. I think it would be beneficial for this province and the residents of this province if we took infrastructure and we thought about our needs over a 10year period. Then we could take different elements, different needs within societies, for example when it comes to our jobs strategy, and align those future needs of young people when they get into skilled trades and infrastructure, and tying them together.

Recently, in my constituency office, I had an organization that came to see me, and they talked about how we can link transit in the province of Ontario, in the GTA, with the local needs of jobs. You take a community like Flemingdon Park, which is a community that I was brought up in, and you have the TTC coming straight through, and over the next 10 years, we're going to see that infrastructure developed. Why wouldn't we align our college courses, the architects, university and people in skilled trades with those types of infrastructure needs?

I think if we have a 10-year plan, we could really look at how to align those skill gaps that exist with job opportunities, and that's going to happen through our colleges, our trades and our universities. We need to do some preplanning. So I'm 100% supportive of preplanning. I think 10-year plans would work well for this province so we can ensure that jobs here in the province of Ontario, those jobs that young people need, are aligned with our infrastructure needs. I think this is one of the ways that we can work with universities, colleges and apprenticeships to ensure that young people get the opportunities when we spend money on infrastructure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, today, we have been entertained by some very entertaining speakers—I'll say it that way. The member from Parkdale—High Park is a professional speaker in the respect that she's a member of the clergy and is used to giving sermons, many of which are quite good. In this case here, this was not one that I agreed with, but she spoke very eloquently towards Bill 141.

The member from Halton spoke in a response just a few minutes ago and, I think, made a very substantive comment when he said that after listening to so much debate, he was beginning to have second thoughts about this bill. He saw in one of the sections, perhaps, that it could be a tool, an instrument that could be used in a political way to manipulate the priorities of municipalities. Again, this reinforces the idea that, first of all, members on the government side have been trying to shut down the debate—our democratic right—but when we listen to the debates in the afternoon, we do hear different perspectives. I think, in the end, we all benefit from listening and learning about alternatives.

Now, we know, clearly, that the NDP are large supporters of the government—we understand that. But they disagree on one part here. They disagree on P3s. Well, I put to them and their responses, how do you finance things? The government does not have a box with money in it to build bridges and hospitals. So how they finance it is the question, and what they pay for it. What we are saying is that there are options, like using public sector pension funds, which can guarantee them a rate of 4% or

5%, to help build that infrastructure using public tax money, which is pensions, or they could go to a bank.

You've got to look at how you finance these things, but how you operate them is a more important question. I think that needs to go to committee. Even though it's the right idea, we've got to have a longer-term plan for the type of economy that we need for Ontario. Right now, there isn't one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ouestions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, it was a great speech made by my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, a great 10 minutes to listen to, and I would emphasize one of the points that she talked about. I want to emphasize that what this bill does is okay, because it's in part a response to the attacks on the government and their appeal, desire and eagerness to sponsor P3s. That is the major problem. Part of the major problem is the Windsor-Essex parkway—and you know the story around the girders, one of the major disasters as you give these conglomerates from out of the country the power to manage these projects.

The other big problem is the Crosstown LRT on Eglinton, which is going to be given away, this \$4-billion project, to another huge conglomerate. The Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario is saying, "If you do that and when you do that, we are going to be giving away \$500 million of the public's money." In his desire to appease these groups, the minister has introduced this

bill.

This is about P3s. That's what we really should be talking about. You've got to finance them one way or the other. We're saying public procurement is cheaper. That's what we should be doing. When we hand it off to the private sector to manage, what you are doing is saying, "We are happy to give away taxpayers' money to the pockets of the private sector." That's what Liberals have been doing.

This is the major problem that we should be debating, and we wish we had more time. The member from Parkdale-High Park has raised other issues for which we need more and more discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga East-Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to talk about two points today. The first is, what I'm hearing from the opposition for the most part is why we should be debating. But nobody is questioning the merits of debate in a democracy. What we are questioning is the lack of content. I have not heard anything new in the last one hour that I haven't heard before. In the 10 minutes that the member from Parkdale-High Park spoke, she spoke for eight minutes about the merits of having a debate. How does that forward this bill or make this bill a better bill? If you really have ideas to make it a better bill, put them forward. I am not hearing them. All I'm hearing is, "We want to talk about it." Well, give us some ideas.

The other thing I want to talk about is what happens when a party loses its fundamental values. We are seeing the NDP as Tories in a hurry. They don't want any taxes, but they also don't want the private sector. How can you not want taxes but at the same time not want P3s, unless you are in the business of printing money? This just shows they're absolutely not ready to govern because they can't square the equation.

I would support them completely if they said, "We don't support P3s. It should be funded through government taxes." Hey, go ahead. Stick to that. Raise taxes, and if Ontarians want to elect them, that's fine. But to be disingenuous and on the one hand try to say, "Oh, we are against taxes," and on the other hand try to say, "We are against public-private partnerships"-it's just not possible. It's an example of what happens when you move away from your roots. I certainly am puzzled and baffled by this logic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale-High Park, you have two minutes

for a response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to the points made by the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville, she missed my discussion about P3s. I've had a business. I know business is in the business of making money. We don't want business making money at the expense of taxpayers: That's basically the message.

But even further than that, my point, which obviously was missed by some across the aisle, is practise what you preach. We have a transportation minister who has just tabled a bill on infrastructure and the necessity of longterm planning—so he says—when, in fact, we have a very clear example of short-term thinking and spending as little as possible, even though the cost, long-term, is going to be much greater, and that is the air-rail link from Pearson to Union Station.

If the members opposite are not familiar with it—I know that the member from York South-Weston is certainly familiar with it, because that's the major demand of five different communities where transportation and infrastructure is concerned. In that case, in this instance, he's not practising what he preaches, and that's what I'm saying.

To others who have raised other questions, yes, P3s of course, that's what this bill is really about. Is it about electioneering? Absolutely. Should we have long-range planning? Completely so. But it's just hard to take seriously when its real intent is public-private partnerships on one side, and it's not being put into practice by the very same people who are proposing it on the other. Those are the points, those are the very simple, straightforward points that, one hopes, get across. Certainly they get across to the people in my riding and certainly they get across to the people in York South-Weston, and certainly they get across to the people in Davenport.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this bill. I actually do have a couple of things that I'd like to propose, even as possible amendments to help build this bill to make it into a better one, and I think it is well worth the time to debate this so that we can have that sort of discussion.

I have the benefit of having worked in municipal politics prior to coming to Queen's Park, as have my colleagues from Durham and Leeds–Grenville, and it gives you a unique perspective, I think, a micro-perspective, if you will, on infrastructure and what happens if we don't maintain our infrastructure properly.

We support some of the basic principles of this bill that are advanced in some of the legislation. There are a few things here that I think are important to mention. One is the need for long-term planning and infrastructure. This is something that seems to have fallen through the cracks, simple long-term planning for what we're going to do into the future with our infrastructure. The difficult and the wonderful thing about infrastructure is that it can mean just about anything. It can mean anything from schools to parks to sewers to roads-you name it. These are all the things that we need to make our communities grow and thrive, and if we don't have a sustainable infrastructure in our communities, everything falls apart. To have a long-term plan for it, not just to build it, but to maintain it—that's a critical element that this bill actually begins to address that I think is interesting.

Infrastructure investments should be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria. This also is very important, to make sure that we're not just randomly building infrastructure, that the infrastructure is being built in such a way that it is prioritized, so first things first. I know that there's a development right near me, where I live, in Barrie, where the city has actually been able to mandate infrastructure going in before the development goes in ahead of it. We have seen this happen in other places in Barrie, a very fast-growing community, where the infrastructure was built after the commercial development was built, and it caused mayhem in Barrie for quite a few years. The infrastructure that was built afterwards wasn't even adequate and had to be redone again-and we're talking about massive, highway-based infrastructure because of a lack of long-term planning, both municipally and provincially. That's a critical element that this bill begins to address that I think is beneficial.

We should also know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets. When I talk about maintaining our assets and maintaining our critical infrastructure to keep us moving, it's important to know the state of it and to understand what bridges need to be fixed and when, what roads need to be fixed and when, and what sewers underneath those roads need to be fixed and when. Many of us who are in this House and who have actually served municipally will be aware that sometimes you go and fix a road—how many times have you seen this?—only to realize that the sewer underneath it, because sewers and water infrastructure generally run underneath roads, needs to be fixed. Because it wasn't prioritized and it wasn't identified, you end up tearing up a brand new road that was just paved only to fix the

infrastructure underneath it because you didn't prioritize it properly. That is a huge waste of money, and it happens all too often.

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The government should publish a minimum 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs with a strategy to meet those needs: That kind of speaks to everything else, I think. That's an all-encapsulating sort of catch-all that I think is important. Now, what isn't addressed specifically is how that's going to get done.

When we talk about infrastructure, even talking as a former city councillor in the city of Barrie, I know that the city of Barrie took at least two years to actually get an inventory of its infrastructure and then be able to prioritize it properly. It took a lot of money and a lot of resources to be able to do that in a way that was effective, and then the payoff comes.

I think there needs to be a recognition that there is a lot of money being attached here, because we all know that Ontario's infrastructure is much larger than any one municipality. It's a huge challenge to undertake and it needs a specific plan to make it happen, and it would be better to see that in this bill. Right now, it seems like more of a dream and a wish list than it does actually a practical plan.

The legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of these proposed principles, and I see that as a bit of a flaw. There are some proposed amendments I'd like to see, such as a mandatory province-wide asset management program. The legislation should mandate that an asset management program be implemented that would provide an up-to-date inventory of all existing provincial and municipal infrastructure assets and the relevant state of repair of those assets. That goes back to the point I made originally. That really means we need to know what we have and the state of what we have, and then the priorities of how we keep that stuff up to date, because right now many municipalities—I think probably just about every municipality in Ontario, maybe even in Canada, Speaker-suffer from an infrastructure deficit, which means that we're paying far more to maintain our infrastructure at a point where it's growing and we're adding to it.

This is a critical problem for municipalities, as it is for the province, and if we don't prioritize it and cities aren't given a sustainable model to be able to maintain their infrastructure, especially from the province, we run into some serious trouble in the next several years. We see this happening in Toronto, with crumbling infrastructure and water mains breaking in the summertime and in the wintertime, causing huge damage. That's a result of not knowing what infrastructure you have and the state of it, and just letting it go, and then it costing a lot more money to fix it after it has done the damage. So it's a critical element to any bill, and I'd like to see this addressed more specifically in the bill.

The bill summary: We talk about long-term planning. The Minister of Infrastructure would be required to table

a 10-year plan in the Legislature. The first plan is to be tabled within three years of the legislation coming into force and subsequent plans tabled every five years.

Certainly, it's a worthy attempt at long-term planning, and I think we've seen several elements here of failure in long-term planning. One that was mentioned by the member from High Park is the ARL, the air-rail link between Pearson and Union Station. Proper long-term planning in infrastructure is long overdue, especially in this project. Nowhere is it illustrated better than in this debacle, which is what it's turning into. This has been talked about for years, for decades, the air-rail link. It's something that we needed, something that we wanted, and something that will help get the economy going.

With the Pan/Parapan American Games coming in 2015, the government has decided to rush the project, at a significant cost, and vet we haven't been able to find out what that exact cost is of rushing to be ready for the Pan Am Games. It's a potential double spend, to electrify the diesel train that's going in right after the games. The promise here is, "We're going to rush to get it done and make sure we have an air-rail link going between Pearson and Union, and then we're going to electrify it afterwards, because that was our original intent anyway." This could come at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, somewhere between \$500 million and \$900 million. potentially. This is a huge expense, the cost of rushing it, and it's the result of a lack of long-term planning. It's a great example of the need for long-term planning, which this bill, to its credit, addresses.

We also have found that there's a lack of updates. When we request updates, we're met with redacted information on the website. We have no idea of what it will cost, especially as the games come closer and closer. By the way—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to bring that back to the bill that's in front of us?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Absolutely, Speaker. I'm speaking exactly to a major infrastructure project here. I think it's well within the bounds of the bill.

Electrification of this massive infrastructure project has been committed to by the minister right after the games. However, we have zero intention to actually do it, because we know there's no money. Speaking on one hand and not doing it on the other hand is something that we see a lot from this government, actually. The need for long-term planning, as this bill would point out, would effectively deal with this.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have been patient with the member wandering way off the topic of the bill, but he is also imputing motive to a minister of the crown. That would contravene standing order 23(h). I would ask that he come back to the bill and not impugn a minister of the crown or impute motive.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie can resume. I would ask you to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Sure. I am happy to speak to one of the largest infrastructure projects that this government has undertaken.

In any case, long-term planning, which is one of the first elements of this very bill, could have helped this problem of electrifying, after the fact, this major infrastructure project at all. Speaker, with due respect, I couldn't be speaking to this bill more clearly.

"(2) Guiding principles

"The province and broader public sector organizations, such as universities, hospitals and municipalities, would consider key principles when determining infrastructure plans and investments, including the following:

"—demographic and economic trends and fiscal plans;
"—advancing the use of new technologies and practices and supporting innovative partnerships between government and industry; and

"—protecting the environment and considering the impacts of severe weather on infrastructure."

All too often, infrastructure decisions are based on election time. Every party, every government, has been subject to this stress at election time, or even for lobby efforts, so there's a need to be more accountable, for a more accountable process based on need. We've seen this with this government, certainly, with gas plants, and even potentially with the announcement today of an RFP process for universities.

So there is a need for this bill. We know that it addresses such a massive piece of the budget of the government and means such a great deal to all the municipalities and all of us who travel the roads and even flush our toilets. It's a critical piece that needs more substance, and I'd like to see more real amendments made to it in committee

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 31, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Transier Transact Office to Transier Gaile porteredance
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de
,		gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 31 March 2014

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

**Lundi 31 mars 2014** 



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Dave Levac

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 31 March 2014

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 31 mars 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to have Girls Government 2014 here today. Schools represented are James Culnan Catholic School and Swansea Public School. The students are Karolina Zablothy, Cynthia Pham, Nicole Bonner, Renee Deer, Natalie Cocev, Ivana Marsusic, Kate Bryant, Hannelore Koch, Chloe Bhumgara, Rachel Salem-Wiseman and Clare Radnoff. Their principals are Karen Ridley and Michele O'Dowd, and their teachers are Sonya Henderson and Rui Pedrosa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I want to introduce someone who I know will be visiting us in the Legislature very soon. MPP for Davenport, Jonah Schein, our colleague, welcomed a baby daughter, Hope Wheatcroft Schein, at 3:25 this morning. I am assured she is healthy and beautiful. I want to give a special shout-out to the new mom, who did all the work, Kristin Wheatcroft, a wonderful lady whom I've known since she was eight years old, and a shout-out to Les and Mary Wheatcroft. I'm getting really jealous—another grandchild. Congratulations to all.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce today Kerry Vandenberg, from my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. He's doing his MBA at the Schulich School of Business, specializing in public management. He's also the riding president for the riding of York West.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Today, the page captain is Divya Dey. We'd like to welcome her mother, Dia Dey; her father, Suman Dey; and her grandmother, Indira Dutta, to the Legislature.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I'd like to introduce my nephew, Greg Fougere, who is down for the day shadowing our Legislature.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

Before I get to that, I just want to, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, extend our best wishes to Constable Michael Klarenbeek and Constable Klarenbeek's family.

Constable Klarenbeek, of course, was shot at the Brampton courthouse. He's recovering in Brampton Civic Hospital, and we want to send our best wishes for a speedy recovery to this Ontario hero.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: To the Deputy Premier: It's been three years since the Liberal government got mired in this controversy around the cancellation of gas plants that cost taxpayers over a billion dollars.

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The most troubling allegations have now arisen as of Thursday, when the Ontario Provincial Police anti—

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The Minister of Immigration and Citizenship will come to order, the Minister of the Environment will come to order and the Minister of Finance will come to order.

Please finish.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The OPP anti-rackets squad indicated that an outsider was given access to destroy criminal evidence—a criminal activity to destroy evidence. I share the frustration and outrage of Ontarians about this allegation. I wonder why Premier Wynne, or you as Deputy Premier, did nothing to prevent the destruction of evidence.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, want to offer wishes for a very speedy recovery to Officer Mike Klarenbeek and his family. This has reminded us of the bravery of our front-line police officers, who every day put their life on the line to protect us. We wish him a speedy, speedy recovery

Speaker, I will be referring the supplementary to the government House leader, but I do want to address the issue of the Premier's availability today. She is doing her job as Premier. She is on her way to Sault Ste. Marie. She's got a number of events there, including a very important announcement at Algoma college. She's been available multiple times over the weekend. She was in Lindsay on Friday. She was with MPP Wong to visit the residents of Shepherd Village. She's been available all weekend long to answer questions. I will look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I hope, Speaker, I can have your assistance. If the Premier is not able to answer questions today, I certainly hope the Deputy Premier will answer those on the Premier's behalf and not refer them.

The Premier and I actually had a meeting on January 28, in her office. I assumed I was speaking with Premier Wynne on January 28. She conducted herself that way in the Premier's office. She actually asked me to back off on pursuing contempt charges in committee; I now understand why. I understand, too, that you attended a caucus meeting of January 30 of this year, 2014, and Premier Wynne ran that caucus meeting, not Dalton McGuinty. Can you confirm that Premier Wynne was in charge, that she ran the caucus meeting on January 30?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let's start at the beginning. Thursday, we learned of some very serious allegations. They are allegations, but if true, they are very serious, and we take them very seriously on this side of the House. But the fact of the matter is that if members take time to review the document which was tabled in court, they will learn that these are allegations which pertain to the period in which Premier McGuinty was Premier and to his former chief of staff. They make no reference to an involvement by the current Premier. The current Premier has explained that, and despite that, the Leader of the Opposition continues with baseless accusations which are, quite frankly, below an insult to the office that he holds. We look to him to remedy the situation and to stop playing politics with this very serious matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, these are the most serious of allegations of the criminal destruction of evidence in the Premier's office around the gas plant scandal. I would fully expect that if the Premier is unable to answer these questions today, despite knowing these questions would be at the top of the list, the Deputy Premier should do so. Taxpayers are entitled to very direct answers to simple, straightforward questions. If you argue that Premier Wynne was unaware of what was happening under her watch, when she was in charge, then that shows she was grossly incompetent and extraordinarily negligent. Either she was complicit or she wilfully looked the other way, neither of which qualifies her to be Premier of the province of Ontario and get us out of the mess that we're in.

Let me ask again of the Deputy Premier, which is it? Was she involved, or did she simply intentionally look the other way?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this is very disappointing. The Leader of the Opposition has no interest in the facts. The documents that were tabled in court make it clear that the accusations—they remain accusations; we all have to be very careful—deal with the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty and have nothing to do with the current Premier.

Mr. Speaker, let's try to get our facts straight here. The Leader of the Opposition stands up and talks about a meeting with the incoming Premier in her office before she became Premier. That was in the office of the acting or the incoming Premier. That had nothing to do with Premier McGuinty's office. Premier McGuinty was Premier until February 11, and the accusations which are outlined, the accusations which have not been proven, involve his former chief of staff. It is time that the Leader of the Opposition-he is debasing his office-acknowledge these facts, and remove from his website and stop repeating allegations which are totally baseless.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Again, back to the Acting Premier: Facts are stubborn things. I met with Premier Wynne in her office when she conducted herself as Premier on January-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Finance will come to order—second time.

Please carry on.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Facts are facts, and I'm going to hold you accountable on behalf of taxpayers in the province of Ontario to get to the bottom of the scandal.

She conducted herself as Premier. The House leader now says, well, she was something called "Acting Premier." She also says she was the Premier-designate. She said she was leader of the Liberal Party. Enough of the dissembling; enough of the misinformation. The fact of the matter is, Kathleen Wynne was in charge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The fact of the matter is, Kathleen Wynne was in charge. She was at the wheel. This is as much Kathleen Wynne's scandal as Dalton McGuinty's. The criminal destruction of evidence—the allegations took place between February 6 and March 20.

So come clean: Was she responsible or was she wilfully negligent, both of which disqualify—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will come to order.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader,

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the meeting in question between the Leader of the Opposition and Kathleen Wynne was held in the transition office, not the Premier's office, located here in this building. I think it's time we get our facts straight.

There were documents that were filed in court last Thursday, and those documents made it clear that this is an allegation—unproven allegation—against the former

chief of staff of Premier McGuinty.

There have been a number of third parties who have taken a look at these documents. Let me tell you what they're saying. The Ottawa Citizen, March 28: "Trail of Evidence in Gas Plant Probe Ends Before Wynne's Government Starts."

"Detectives have found no evidence that any computers in Premier Kathleen Wynne's office were accessed."

Toronto Star, March 29, 2014: "A close reading of the 111 pages of OPP documents provides no hint yet of any impropriety" when Wynne was Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now they say that the meeting took place in the transition office. I'll refresh your memory of another meeting that took place. It wasn't just me who met with Kathleen Wynne as Premier. On January 31, Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty met with the Lieutenant Governor on the transfer of power. On that day, January 31, Kathleen Wynne took over as Premier-designate, which gave her the authority to direct government activities. On January 31, she met with Dalton McGuinty and the Lieutenant Governor. She became Premier-designate. That tells me that she was in charge, that she is responsible, that this scandal has equal responsibility with Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty.

My question is, why didn't she say no? Why didn't she stop the destruction of evidence related to the gas plant scandal? Isn't that an incredible failure to do a very basic job expected by taxpayers?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Just as a reminder to all members, I will say it over and over again. Please refer to all members in this place either by their title or by their riding. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's accusations—he can repeat them over and over again but they do not make them true. They are baseless, they are irresponsible and they demean the very high office that he holds.

Again, last Thursday we learned of a document that was filed in court. That document contains allegations—unproven, Mr. Speaker—about the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty and it outlines a series of activities that happened while Premier McGuinty was the Premier.

The Leader of the Opposition can try to turn himself into pretzels and stand here over and over again, saying things which are not accurate, but the fact of the matter is that the facts speak for themselves. As the Leader of the Opposition learned yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have certainly consulted legal experts as to the action that we may be taking if he continues in this baseless stream of allegations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, let's look at Kathleen Wynne's record. She initially said that the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me; title, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier Wynne's record. She said initially the gas plant scandal would cost \$40 million; she said that in the House. We found out it was \$1 billion. She was the co-chair of the Liberal campaign when they ordered the cancellation of the gas plants. She was actually the one who signed the cabinet directive to pay TransCanada whatever it took to make the gas plants scandal go away. That cost taxpayers \$1 billion.

She had meetings in her office on January 28 with me, January 31 with the Premier, and then on February 7 she ordered the Auditor General to do a review of the gas plants file. You say she was in charge on February 11. On February 7, she was giving orders around here. So clearly she was in charge. And if she wasn't, the extraordinary incompetence tells me she is not fit to get this province out of the mess we're in. Clearly, if we want to get Ontario back on track, it's time to change the team that runs this province and builds our great province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I will put the Premier's record up against the Leader of the Opposition's record any day of the week.

On the one hand, we have a Premier who re-struck— Mr. Garfield Dunlop: If you want to put the record

up, let's go to the polls.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order, please. The member from Simcoe North, come to order. Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: —who re-struck the justice committee with a broad mandate and broad powers, has provided hundreds of thousands of documents to that committee, has appeared twice in front of that committee and made sure that government members, ministers and staff have also appeared in front of the committee.

What we have from the Leader of the Opposition is someone who went on YouTube and said that if he became Premier of the province, he would cancel the gas plants. We have a leader of a party whose candidates went out and campaigned against the very same gas plants that he's speaking about today, and he will not come clean and acknowledge that very simple yet important fact.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The

leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, question period is supposed to be a venue for the government to be held accountable. By refusing to face questions today about the Liberal gas plants scandal, the Premier is making a mockery of accountability. New Democrats will not participate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The

member from Nepean-Carleton.

#### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Typical NDP: When the going gets tough, they get going.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I even had the Liberals applauding me on that one, Speaker.

Speaker, you'll indulge me on a time line to the Deputy Premier—and I would expect an answer. On January 26, Premier Wynne becomes leader of the Liberal Party. On the 28th, she meets with the leader of the official opposition, asking to stop the gas plants probe. On the 30th of January, she leads the Liberal caucus in a caucus of meeting. On January 31, she meets with the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, to assume leadership as Premier-elect. On February 4, an IT services cabinet officer provides David Livingston's executive assistant with a global administrative password. On February 6, Laura Miller, deputy chief of staff, has computer accesse. From February 7, she then has her computers accessed. Between February 6 and March 20—Premier Wynne is Premier of Ontario—there is access to wipe 24 hard drives clean.

On Thursday, March 27, 2014, I asked them if we could have Premier Wynne's hard drive. She refused to give it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader. Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me ask the honourable member to recall another date—and, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition will remember it—February 11, when Premier Wynne was sworn in as Premier in this very chamber with the Leader of the Opposition present. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, this dog doesn't hunt.

February 11 was when Kathleen Wynne became Premier, but let's go beyond that to look at the document that was released that was made public last Thursday—the court document. It makes very clear that there are serious allegations—not proven—against Mr. Livingston, the former chief of staff of Premier McGuinty, about actions that took place under his watch.

Mr. Speaker, I can continue quoting: the Globe and Mail, March 31, 2014, "There is nothing in the documents that suggests any records were deleted after Ms. Wynne was sworn into office on Feb. 11, 2013."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The problem with the theory by the government House leader, and, in fact, the Premier, is she is expecting us to believe that no one was Premier of Ontario for six weeks. There is not an Ontarian out there who believes that. They believe that Kathleen Wynne was Premier of Ontario on February 11. They believe that the computers were accessed during that period of time.

If the Premier is so clean on all of this, why has she not responded to my question of last Thursday asking whether her hard drive was compromised, tampered with or deleted? She hasn't done that because she either doesn't know, or it has been. She needs to come clean. Will your government do it on behalf of the taxpayers of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader?

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, maybe we need a little bit more money for opposition research.

As to the honourable member's question, I direct her towards the court document, which has been fuelling her tirades over the past few days, where it outlines those computers which it is alleged were tampered with. It's very clear that the current Premier's name appears nowhere. No, the current Premier's computer was not involved with this. The court documents are very clear. For the honourable member to be engaging in this sort of baseless allegation—these drive-by smears—is really an insult to the office that she holds as an opposition critic.

Mr. Speaker, on February 11, Premier Wynne became Premier. Before that, Premier McGuinty was Premier. The court documents make very clear, as the media reports have outlined, that the allegations in question are about his former chief of staff Mr. Livingston.

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The city of Brampton is one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada. This means that more and more young people are graduating from our high schools and deciding about their future.

I strongly believe that post-secondary education is vital to the success of young people in this ever-changing competitive world. Therefore, the creation of a university campus in an underserved area like Brampton is very important because that provides an opportunity for our young people to get a high-quality post-secondary education closer to their homes. I'm very passionate about the possibility of locating a university campus that can better serve the needs of students in Brampton.

Can the minister tell my constituents how we can bring a new campus to Brampton?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I know the member has been a hugely strong advocate in her region for post-secondary education.

Our government released its framework for major capacity expansion in December, and on Thursday we put out a request for proposals. We're deeply committed to making the long-term investments necessary to build on the world-class reputation that our post-secondary sector has earned. We need to plan ahead so that our post-secondary system has the capacity to take that next generation of students.

We also know that having a post-secondary institution expand or locate in a community can have a tremendous local economic impact. Interested municipalities will need to work through a university proponent to participate in this RFP. I know the member has a long-standing interest in this RFP, and I'm sure students in her community appreciate that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's great to hear that the residents of my great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South will have an opportunity to work together to bring a new campus to the city of Brampton. However, I'm sure that the people of Brampton would like to know more about how they can qualify for a campus under the government's policy framework. I will certainly do everything I can to work with local partners to make that happen.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain what factors he will be considering when reviewing applications?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The process for consideration of our campus capacity expansion RFP will be transparent and fair for all proponents. A key consideration will be ensuring that the expansions take place in regions where student demand and growth are located: 30% of the weighting will go to location. Cost is also critical during these challenging fiscal times: 40% of weighting will go toward affordability for students and taxpayers and value for money. And 30% of weighting will go toward the campus product itself, including local community and economic impacts, promotion of innovation, impact on priorities, among others. Preference will be given to proponents that involve partnerships with colleges.

After a decade of record investment in our globally competitive post-secondary education system, we're following up with further long-term investments to ensure we provide that next generation of students with the quality of education they deserve.

#### FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Acting Premier. There are a lot of similarities between the gas plant scandal and Ontario's latest financial debacle. Your government said the gas plant cancellation would cost \$40 million, but it took the Auditor General to tell us that it's really \$1.1 billion. Now in the budget, you told us and the financial community that you will balance by 2017. Yet only days before that, your own documents entitled "Confidential Advice to Cabinet" said you had a \$4.5-billion gap. I'm sensing a pattern here.

During the gas plant scandal, you knew one thing and told the public something different. Now you're doing the same with finance, telling us one thing when you know the opposite to be true. Quite frankly, how can we believe anything you ever say again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we wrote off \$40 million as attributed to the cancellation of that power plant. That was written off. The Auditor General was asked to review it, and they noted that the relocation of the power plant, over the period of 30 years, would amount to an additional billing as it relates to the construction and continuation of that facility, the investments in transmission and so forth.

The member is now talking about the integrity of the numbers that have been presented, numbers that the Auditor General has also reviewed and confirmed as correct. He is saying that we have somehow hidden something that has been out there for public consumption in our fall economic statement. If the member would just read, Mr. Speaker, he would understand exactly where is that place and the fact that we're making revisions as it relates to the global changes—we're reacting, and we are taking the proper steps to meet our targets and balance the books by 2017-18, as we said we would.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: Let me compare the gas plant scandal to your financial debacle another way. During the contempt hearings, you turned over 36,000 documents, and a dozen cabinet ministers stood up and declared, "You have all the documents." Two weeks later, you reluctantly turned over 20,000 more documents that, we learned under oath, were ordered removed by Liberal operatives.

Now come budget time, you announce that you're on track to balance the budget by 2017-18, and again, eight cabinet ministers stood up in this Legislature and declared, "We're on track to balance the budget." Yet your confidential advice to cabinet only days before told you and your cabinet ministers that you're not on track to balance.

I have a question for you: Why do the Liberal cabinet ministers continue to stand in this Legislature and say one thing when they know the complete opposite to be true?

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are on track to balance the books by 2017-18. More importantly, four years in a row, we beat our targets. Our spending was less than 1% year over year, and we were the only government to actually cut spending last year. We have met our targets. The Auditor General has confirmed them as such. We're taking the steps necessary. What is true is that we do have a plan to create those jobs and stimulate economic growth by investing in our economy, not by doing across-the-board cuts that would make it even more difficult for recovery. We recognize what's necessary.

We have also acknowledged that the global marketplace has changed, and Ontario has had to recalibrate to ensure that we stay ahead. We've led the way. We have more than 180% of those jobs returning to the province of Ontario because of the actions that we've taken, working in collaboration with our stakeholders. We're the leanest government in Canada, the lowest-cost government, by far, from any other government in this country.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** My question is to the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Co-operative housing is an important component of Ontario's afford-

able housing solution. Several co-operative housing units were originally built in the 1970s. The then federal government had worked with the province to ensure that they received federal support. With these agreements, the coops helped Ontario's most needy by providing rentgeared-to-income subsidies, making life more affordable for Ontarians. However, these agreements are expiring, and we're quickly approaching the day in 2020 when most of these contracts will end and so will rent-gearedto-income supplements.

Two weeks ago the Close the Housing Gap campaign was here at Queen's Park, advocating that our government stand up for these vulnerable Ontarians. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please explain what our government has done to support Ontario's co-operatives and social housing providers?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for his advocacy on behalf of

those in co-op and social housing.

I want to recognize the hard work and advocacy of a few people: Bud Purves, Harvey Cooper, Ginny Adey and Sean Gadon, who came to the Legislature to advocate for this very important issue.

Our government believes that long-term, local solutions are the only way that we can tackle homelessness. That's why our government has focused on Ontario's housing first strategy, which gives priority to finding permanent housing linked to flexible support services. We understand the importance of this. It's why we've invested \$3 billion in affordable housing since 2003, more than any government before us.

Though we've got more work to do, I was pleased to learn that the former minister met with Councillor Ana Bailão in February to hear their concerns and see how our government could help. I reaffirm our government's commitment to work with the city of Toronto and all housing providers, and the federal government, to ensure that we have predictable, long-term solutions for Ontario's most vulnerable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would like to thank the minister for the answer. I'm sure my constituents will be pleased to hear our government's commitment to co-

operative and social housing.

Two weeks ago the Close the Housing Gap campaign came to Queen's Park. They spoke of their need for funds to continue their investment in capital repairs for Toronto Community Housing, which will be \$2.6 billion over the next decade. They have also asked that we have all parties in this House stand with our government to continue our call on the federal government to maintain the existing housing stock. They believe that the federal government needs to come back to the table with a longterm, stable source of funding.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please explain what our government is doing to ensure that the opposition and the third party follow our government's lead in calling on the federal government to maintain their funding?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Our government has continued to call on our federal partners to join with our government to come up with a stable, long-term solution for homelessness in Ontario. That's why the former minister urged municipalities at the ROMA/OGRA conference last month to ask their local members and Minister Kenney to urge the federal government to come back to the table, and I understand that the city of Brantford is doing so.

However, unfortunately, like the federal Conservatives, the third party has been silent—and we can see what has happened here today. Sadly, this is typical for a party whose leader, according to the Toronto Star, "has done everything possible to avoid ... policies on tough

issues that require political bravery."

While they sat on the sidelines, we've acted: over \$600 million for affordable housing in Toronto since 2003, 4,700 new housing units, repairing over 3,700, and helping almost 15,000 homes with housing allowances and rent supplements.

There's more to do-this is a societal issue-and I hope the third party will finally stand shoulder to shoulder with us to demand that the federal government step up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Acting Premier. We've all heard before the tales of what the Premier knew to be a fact: She knew the Oakville cancellations would cost \$40 million, despite signing a cabinet document that stated otherwise. She knew that the documents requested in committee had been made public before thousands and thousands more were dropped on our desks at the eleventh hour. So you will excuse the people of Ontario if after a year and a half of being taken for a ride by this Premier, we don't accept where she's dropped us off. Either the Premier knew full well what was going on, or she was willfully blind to the facts. Acting Premier, can you tell the people of Ontario, which is it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader. Hon. John Millov: Talk about being blind to the facts. We've all established that on February 11, Kathleen Wynne became Premier of this province. But, Mr. Speaker, don't take my word for it. I invite the honourable member to go read the document that was tabled in court. That document made it very clear that the accusations—which have not been proven; I think we all have to be very careful—were about the actions that took place under Premier McGuinty's time as Premier, with his former chief of staff.

The fact of the matter is that, again, I can quote media outlet after media outlet which undertook the analysis of it and came away with the conclusion that they are engaging in the most baseless kind of character attacks; and as the Premier pointed out in her open letter yesterday, she is taking the steps of consulting legal experts on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, that was a completely

unbelievable answer. This government brags about the

number of documents handed over, when they know full well that the most damning documents were deleted or hidden or corrupted or damaged or destroyed by a Liberal strategist's boyfriend.

We're worried. We're worried that there is no reason for the Premier to come clean with the people of Ontario, because in the world of Liberal politics money talks,

especially hush money.

Acting Premier, in the real world, when you escort a man to your computer, give him your password and watch him destroy data, you get fired. When Liberal staffer Lauren Ramey does it, she gets promoted to press secretary to the Minister of Education; Beckie Codd-Downey gets promoted to press secretary; and Rebecca MacKenzie gets promoted to chief of staff—all while Peter Wallace felt it wasn't his place to say anything at all. Acting Premier, why do the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals get promotions for staying quiet?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I go on, I'm going to offer a caution, and that caution is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is continuing to speak, first when I was trying to say something, and then when I was trying to get his attention.

Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Education will come to order. The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

I'm going to offer a caution: I don't like some of the language. Although I didn't quite find it unparliamentary, I'm going to caution the member not to go any further with that kind of accusation.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I didn't think it was possible for the member to go any lower, but he's just

proven it in that question.

Last Thursday, a document was made public, a court document, which contains allegations about the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty. It's a voluminous document; I understand over 100 pages. Everyone who has looked at it knows that it is very, very clearly about the former Premier's watch. The allegations are directed at Mr. Livingston; they are not proven.

To stand up here in the Legislature and to attempt to drag through the mud the names of hard-working staffers on this side of the House who were in no way implicated—and that document makes it very, very clear—is beneath him. I thought that member was an honourable member, but what he just did is beyond—beyond—contempt, and I cannot believe that he would have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

1110

#### RETIREMENT HOMES

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Speaker, my question today is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. Minister, on several occasions while addressing this Legislature, you

have provided up-to-date information on the implementation of the Retirement Homes Act, 2010. Thanks to this important piece of legislation, for the first time in Ontario, seniors living in retirement homes have strong protections under provincial law.

In Scarborough alone, there are 10 retirement homes, four of which are in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, serving hundreds of senior residents. Minister, I know that you have been to several locations in Scarborough, and our seniors have welcomed you there. I know my constituents in Scarborough–Guildwood appreciate this government's hard work to keep these residents safe and secure and involved in their local communities.

Speaker, can the minister inform this House of some of the work conducted by the Retirement Homes Regula-

tory Authority?

**Hon. Mario Sergio:** It's indeed very refreshing to hear the member from Scarborough–Guildwood speak with such passion and advocacy about her seniors. The same goes for all our seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say that since its inception, we have approved some 697 retirement home licences, and this speaks well for the regulatory authority. As well, we have to say that, thanks to the present government, seniors today are enjoying more safety and more protection in their retirement homes than ever before. It means that the regulatory authority is working and will continue to do so.

Since 2012 up to now, we have received some 5,000 inquiries with respect to retirement homes. We continue to provide information on the conditions of all retirement homes; that is available to all seniors and their families. They can access that information through the info line, as well as the rhra.ca website, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. I know that families in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood are also thankful that this government has always been ready and willing to listen to the needs of our seniors.

Speaker, the seniors of my riding, like thousands of seniors across Ontario, have worked so hard to build this great province. Like my parents, who immigrated from Jamaica, they arrived in Canada many years ago. They chose to make this their home, right here in Ontario. They went straight to work, laying the foundations for the communities we live in today.

Recently, the fifth phase of the Retirement Homes Act, 2010, came into effect. Can the minister explain how these new regulations continue to build on the successful protections implemented by our government?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again, Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. She's quite right: We have made quite a few improvements since the act came into force. As a matter of fact, we have just approved phase 5 of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority. I have to say that, thanks to the present government of Kathleen Wynne, seniors today are moving forward and they know that they can get better service, better quality and better care in a very safe environment.

What are some of the changes that we have been proposing and that are coming from phase 5? We have established the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority emergency fund. We have mandatory insurance for each retirement home. We have established a formal process for complaint handling by the RHRA, including a complaints review officer, and screening for staff and volunteers by the police. As well, we have created an RHRA—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier. Your unelected, hand-picked Liberal Premier knew when she ran for the leadership of your disgraced party that she was inheriting the contempt charges and she was inheriting the criminal activity that went along with it.

Her predecessor fled the office like a coward, yet she stood on the stage, arm in arm chanting the name Dalton, as you did, even though his reputation had been tarnished beyond belief.

She knew that the gas plant scandal was the biggest scandal in Ontario's history—and it turns out the most expensive, too—yet she expects us to believe that she knew nothing about the secret, diabolical mission that was going on to destroy documents in her office when she was the Premier.

Now, Minister, I know you have your own OPP investigation to contend with, but how can you continue to stand up for this government that's so embroiled in criminal activity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Again, I'm going to offer a caution: Making any accusations of criminal activity is not expected from any member in this House.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, it really does insult the office that member holds as a critic. That question was the worst kind of politics. What we've seen here today is a Progressive Conservative Party that doesn't care about facts. They don't give a damn about facts. All they care about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please. Hon. John Milloy: Withdraw.

All they care about is scoring very cheap political points. The fact of the matter is that the reason why we are having this debate and discussion here is because a court document was made public last Thursday. That court document was very serious but it's very clear: It's about allegations that took place under the former Premier and is directed—it's not proven, and again we have to be very careful—at his former chief of staff, Mr. Livingston.

But you know, if the honourable member wants to talk about gas plants, then perhaps in the supplementary he'll tell us about the cost—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. John Milloy: —PCs when they stood on YouTube and promised that if they were elected, those gas plants would be cancelled.

Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Oxford will withdraw.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Acting Premier—I don't know what the heck this government is going to do when that guy leaves because somebody is actually going to have to answer a question over there.

You know what? The stink of this gas plant scandal is something this government can't outrun. They're trying to continue the cover-up as long as they can, but they're not going to get away with it. You've got the same old McGuinty cast of characters there. These are the same people who stood up on the stage in January of last year and said they were going to continue the Dalton legacy. That's what they promised to do. And yes, they've done an excellent job of it because it has already cost us over \$1 billion to cancel that gas plant. Any time anyone brings this government's incompetence to light, what we get is a threat to sue, silence and censure.

Will you do the honourable thing? You said you would stand on your record. Will you call the non-confidence motion today and let the public decide this once and for all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Before I return, I offer an apology to the member from Oxford. I was incorrect, and I apologize. I will now ask the member from Nipissing to withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Government House leader?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'm not sure about my colleagues, but when I saw that ridiculous display, I was quite proud of the fact that our Premier has sought and obtained legal advice. The fact of the matter is that what we have seen from the opposition is this drive-by smear.

Again, there was a document that was released by the courts last Thursday that makes it very clear that there were serious allegations that took place under the former Premier's watch.

Again, what does the Toronto Star have to say on March 29? "A close reading of the 111 pages of OPP documents provides no hint yet of any impropriety when" Premier Wynne was Premier.

Toronto Star, March 30, regarding Tim Hudak's claims about Premier Wynne: "The OPP documents suggest no such thing." It is time that the Progressive Conservatives came clean, that they apologized and that they removed the offensive language from their website and stopped spreading these un-based smears.

1120

#### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario is recognized for its many excellent academic and research institutions and their strong collaboration with industry. To build on this further, we continue to create the right conditions that will lead to an innovative business climate that will attract investment, create jobs and increase the quality of life for Ontarians.

Fostering collaboration in this intensely competitive global economy is important. It is also to our competitive advantage. To help to translate Ontario's research strengths into commercialized activities, businesses must be able to access the world-class knowledge and expertise available in Ontario's research institutions.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What steps has the government taken to facilitate knowledge mobilization between industry and academic institutions?

**Hon. Reza Moridi:** I would like to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that very important question.

Our government recognizes the importance of a strong relationship between academic and research institutions and industry in our province. That's why our government created the Collaboration Voucher Program, which provides redeemable credits to small and medium-sized businesses for expertise and resources from Ontario's research and academic institutions and research hospitals. Collaboration vouchers are a practical tool to facilitate knowledge mobilization between industry and academic institutions.

Not only does this voucher program help businesses improve their competitiveness around the world and productivity in the marketplace, but it helps to translate Ontario's research strengths into stronger innovation and commercial activity in the future.

I am proud of our government's initiatives to foster strategic collaboration and knowledge mobilization in our province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to hear that our government is undertaking stronger collaboration between innovative businesses, industry and academic institutions. Ontario's research community is globally recognized as a commerce-friendly jurisdiction that supports the growth of innovative companies and activities.

International research collaboration is a rapidly growing component of core research activities for all countries. They enable researchers to participate in networks of cutting-edge and innovative activity.

Ontario is the home of many world-class researchers. They know that collaboration provides opportunities to move further and faster by working with other leading people in their field. But in a global context, especially as developing countries and economies ramp up their

research investments, to achieve prominence they must collaborate nationally and build international bridges.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: Can he please let us know what international partnerships and collaboration our government has undertaken to promote this research?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank again the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that question. Ontario understands the importance of collaboration and building international bridges to remain competitive.

Ontario has several active MOUs that focus on promoting Ontario's strengths while attracting investments to Ontario. In fact, I had the pleasure of visiting China a couple of weeks ago, with a focus on collaboration and collaborative opportunities in life sciences, information technology and clean technology.

We announced the next phase of our MOU between our government and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China. Under this MOU, a total of 12 academic and industry research and development collaboration projects are being funded by both of our governments. As Ontario's second-largest trading partner, China's emerging economy will remain a key factor in Ontario's international business strategy.

These partnerships will lead to the generation of new technologies, attracting talent and international investments into our province of Ontario and creating jobs for today and tomorrow.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I'm pleased to have the added opportunity today. My question is to the Acting Premier. Look, I don't know what is worse: the Premier evading this assembly and not answering questions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows full well that we do not make reference to people's presence or absence in this House. Don't do it again, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm not sure what's worse, the fact that the Premier is avoiding accountability or the fact that the NDP is refusing to hold this government to account.

I'm going to try it one more time: Since they will not answer whether or not the Premier's hard drive was wiped, will the Acting Premier afford us this opportunity in telling us whether or not the Premier's senior transition staff—and all of her staff, actually—had any of their data wiped clean during that period of time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I answered that question several minutes ago. The honourable member can look at the document that was released by the court which talks about a series of computers which allegations are about. It does not include Premier Wynne. It includes a list of individuals, which is made very clear in that document. I'll tell you what's really bad: the baseless allegations coming from the opposition.

I'll pick up on one point she made about the New Democrats, because it's not just against the Progressive Conservatives. Let me quote the Toronto Star, March 30. The leader of the NDP "indulged in conventional opposition mischief by implying police were 'now focusing on questions about the period after you were sworn in and became Premier'—a clear misreading of the OPP documents."

It's kind of interesting, the theatrics we saw from the New Democrats, because when the PCs tried the same thing in November 2009, the leader of the NDP said, "New Democrats believe it's extremely important to bring the voices of the people into this Legislature.... I not only don't approve of their tactics—being the PCs—but it changes the channel for them"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The NDP and the Liberals can play all the games that they want, with the PR stunt by the Premier yesterday and the PR stunt by the NDP today. The only leader that is here committed to getting to the bottom of the gas plant scandal is Tim Hudak, leader of the official opposition.

Acting Premier, I would like to know this: How much was Peter Faist, the outsider hired by the Liberals to delete the public records, paid? Was he paid from the Premier's office budget or from the Liberal Party of Ontario? How much was he given to destroy these records under Premier Wynne's leadership?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, many of the issues that have been raised by the member have been dealt with in the court document. In terms of the IT company that the honourable member is speaking of, we learned of the allegations on Thursday, as she knows. Following those revelations, an internal investigation was conducted, and it was determined that the company has previously done occasional IT services work for the caucus office under the former Premier and the party office. The company was informed yesterday that its services at the party office were terminated. The proper authorities had been proactively made aware.

But to be clear, the allegations centre on the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty. These are serious allegations. No one disputes that, but the fact of the matter is, they are still allegations. I would caution all members to be very careful and to allow the police to do their work.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, I understand that, yesterday, the Premier sent an open letter to the Leader of the Opposition. In the letter, the Premier asks the Leader of the Opposition, his caucus and his party to stop making false and defamatory allegations. Acting Premier, would you share with the House the contents of that letter?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I would be happy to read into the record the contents of this letter, dated March 30, 2014, to Mr. Tim Hudak.

"Dear Mr. Hudak,

"During your press conference on March 27th you made several false, misleading and defamatory allegations about me"—this is from the Premier. "You alleged that I personally 'oversaw and possibly ordered the criminal destruction of documents' and that criminal conduct took place in my office. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party repeated these false allegations on its website and in a public mailing.

"These allegations and accusations are false and utterly unsupported, and you ought to know it."

I will continue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you to the Acting Premier for beginning to share that letter. From the day that she was sworn in, the Premier has opened up the government to an unprecedented degree. Under the current Premier, the government has implemented mandatory record-keeping rules and staff training, and new rules limiting political staff involvement in commercial third party transactions.

Acting Premier, would you continue to share the contents of that letter?

1130

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier goes on to say, "As political leaders it is our role and public duty to engage in spirited political debate on issues. The decision to relocate the gas plants and the facts related to the ongoing police investigation are legitimate subjects for this political debate. False, misleading and defamatory statements are not, and they represent the worst kind of politics. That is why I'm writing this open letter to you.

"There should be no tolerance for false and defamatory accusations as a means to gain political power.

"I am asking you and your caucus to immediately stop repeating these untrue statements and to immediately remove them from the PC Party website and all other communications.

"I have sought and obtained legal advice"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —"regarding your comments, and if steps are not taken immediately, I will have no choice but to"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —"take all necessary and"—

Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

#### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the government House leader. Moments ago, the government House leader indicated that Peter Faist had a contract with the Liberal Party of Ontario. According to reality, on January 26 Kathleen Wynne became Premier but also became leader of the Liberal Party. That means he was one of her contracted employees. This revelation is quite serious in

that it gives us more of an understanding into what is going on with this Liberal government.

So I ask the government House leader once more, were members of the transition team and Kathleen Wynne's hard drives wiped clean—yes or no—by a contracted employee of the Liberal Party of Ontario when Kathleen Wynne assumed the leadership of your party?

Hon. John Milloy: I think this stretches longer than a Leonard Cohen song. The fact of the matter is that last Thursday a court document was made public. I would invite the honourable—I believe it's on the Toronto Star website. I know you have to pay a certain fee every month to access it, Mr. Speaker, but I would invite her to read that, because it outlines a number of computers—and it names those staff of the former Premier, Premier McGuinty—that were, in fact, according to this document, wiped clean. There are allegations about the former chief of staff. These are unproven allegations, and I think all of us should allow the police to do their work.

But in terms of the Premier's transition team, I will point out to the honourable member that the justice committee has received information and emails from the Premier's transition team. Again, she should read those documents. As I say, the court document makes clear what computers they're talking about, and it's staff of former Premier McGuinty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm sure that the minister is well aware that I was the first person to bring the revelations to the floor of this assembly. We're quite aware of what's in the ITO. I asked this minister for very specific details. He is choosing not to provide them. I would ask the minister one more time, would he provide the assembly, the committee and the leader of the official opposition with the nature of the contract for Peter Faist from the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Both the caucus office and party require significant IT services, both to support staff and to communicate with Ontarians. My understanding is that the company performed IT services like routine maintenance. But again, I invite the member to take a look at the court document that was released last Thursday. That document clearly outlines allegations—unproven allegations—against the former chief of staff.

In terms of the current Premier, she was the one who worked—I can tell you, as House leader—to open up a committee with a very broad mandate, with a great deal of power. Mr. Speaker, we have provided some 326,000 documents to that committee, including documents and emails from the transition team. Again, she should read them.

#### DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I drive about 1,500 kilometres a week, and I know that Ontario roads are among the safest in North America. It's important that we continue to keep our roads safe while aiming to keep our seniors driving as long as they can—and that they do so safely.

Recently, Minister, your ministry announced changes to the seniors' driving tests, and I know that seniors in my riding have received this news quite well. Many still have questions about exactly what those changes are.

Speaker, through you, I'm just asking the minister: Can you please speak to these changes and how they will affect seniors in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker, because of my mother. I can't give her age because she'll really get upset with me. But suffice to say my mother is a woman of a certain age, and she's watching what I'm saying, so I had better be on my best behaviour today.

She is someone who does not drive at night now. She gave up her car when she moved to the city so she could be close to myself and the rest of the family to take care of her. But if she decided, and my mother is a woman of some substantial will, that she wanted to renew her driver's licence again—and she has kept it; I commended the Premier when she introduced an equivalent to the drivers' licences so people like my mum can have a licence—she would take a vision test, she would undergo a driver record review, and she would attend group education sessions, as well as complete two in-class screening exercises. These are easier, less stressful, less threatening solutions.

We really look forward to an easier system for our mums and dads and our grandparents that is more safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Grant Crack:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Both my mother and father are seniors, and I recall quite well my mother knocking the mirror off my vehicle in the driveway. I just wanted to throw that in.

I'm pleased to hear about the changes to the process. Many seniors share the desire to drive for as long as they can and as safely, as well. The old program was onerous—that I well know—and caused many of the seniors in my area a fair amount of stress. Many of the enhancements to the program are quite similar to the previous renewal process for seniors, but I do notice that we're shortening how long the entire process will take.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister please explain why that is and what you have enhanced? Will this result in any new fees to our seniors?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I once lived in the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell's constituency. My mother and father nearly ended their relationship over my father's acquisition of half a bull. My mother didn't realize—she thought she wasn't going to have room in the freezer for it, until I heard the words "artificial in-

semination," when my sister and I were sent away from the dinner table for the rest of my parents' conversation.

But I know in that constituency and many others, it gets dark. There are many areas of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and rural communities that don't have the kind of lighting—and as your eyes get a little more challenged as you get older, it's important.

There will no longer be these complicated tests people

have to study for-

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And stressful for these seniors.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Very stressful, as the Attorney General has just pointed out—they will just simply be able to come in and do a short classroom test that won't require much. As you know, in legislation before the House, first of all, there are no fees, as the health minister just pointed out—none. Second of all, we're also looking at graduated driver's licences for seniors as well, if we pass the legislation through the House.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to correct my record. Earlier in question period I referred to the current Premier before she had assumed office. I got a bit tongue-tied and said "incoming" or "acting." I, of course, meant Premier-designate at that point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put forward without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance is seeking unanimous consent that the question on the motion of second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

#### **VISITORS**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Consumer Services on a point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On a point of order, I realized I forgot to introduce some elected official here today

from the city of Pickering. We have Doug Dickerson, deputy mayor; and Kevin Ashe, councillor for ward 1. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

The minister responsible for seniors' affairs on a point of order.

**Hon. Mario Sergio:** Speaker, I would really be happy if I could have a late show on the question that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming my guest today, Mr. Suneet Singh Tuli, who is CEO of Datawind. Their claim to fame is that their tablets are outselling both iPads and Samsung tablets in India. Please join me in welcoming him today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guest.

Further introductions? Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

If you will notice, I was very slow in getting to the member from Scarborough-Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, thank you very much. It's my pleasure, and honour in fact, to welcome Miss Jamaica World and Miss World Caribbean to the Legislature today: Ms. Gina Hargitay. This is her first time to Canada, and I think she has brought the sunshine with her, so thank you. I'd also like to welcome her mother, Marlene Campbell Hargitay, her uncle Johannes Campbell, and a friend, of course, to all of us, the Consul General of Jamaica, Mr. Seth George Ramocan. Please welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the Consul General for having it rain every day on my holiday while I was in Jamaica.

Further comment on this introduction?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I'd also like to invite all members in the House to join us in room 230, where Ms. Hargitay will be available for pictures, which we will provide to all of you, and also, I believe, a taste of Appleton rum, which is wonderful for the afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got to say something. I'm not sure if that's parliamentary, to invite people to have rum out of the House, but we thank our visitors and we welcome you.

Mr. Bill Walker: Unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker?
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That could be unanimous consent.

Last call for introductions.

We thank our guests for being here. It's now time for statements.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### **ENGINEERS**

Mr. Jim McDonell: March is National Engineering Month across Canada. As an engineer myself, I'm glad to see the initiatives that inspire younger Canadians to explore the engineering profession. Engineers have consistently taken the possible and pushed its boundaries.

In his official greeting to mark National Engineering Month, the Governor General wrote, "Engineering is truly a profession of faith in the advancement of technology for people's well-being, in Canada and worldwide."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper also commented that "The work engineers do drives investment, contributes to our prosperity, and ensures our safety, comfort and wellbeing."

As part of engineering month, the Upper Canada chapter of Professional Engineers of Ontario hosted its annual bridge-building competition for grades 5 to 12 students. Their challenge was to build a bridge out of 200 Popsicle sticks and white glue, which was then subjected to a load test.

Kaytlin Andrews and Charlotte Reed of Char-Lan school beat their high school peers to take first place.

Twelve-year-old Eric Ronkin of école Rose-des-Vents took second place, following in the footsteps of his father, Dimitri, who is an engineer at the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp.

Third place was taken by the Filliol brothers, Caleb, Eric and Jean, of école Notre Dame.

Our future infrastructure and safety and our province's leadership in technological innovation depend on a growing generation of passionate, inquisitive and resourceful engineers. I am pleased to see that the future leaders of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry are ready to face that challenge.

#### **BIKES FOR CUBA**

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's my privilege to rise today to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of two of my constituents from Port Colborne, Mr. Aubrey Foley and Kathleen Cosby, who have started an initiative to provide bikes to underprivileged children in Cuba.

Mr. Foley is a 69-year-old Port Colborne resident who has been repairing used bicycles out of his home, using his own money to pay for the necessary parts. The initiative then sends the bikes to children in Cuba who otherwise would not be able to afford one.

Two bikes have already been sent to a 13-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy, and yesterday, a volunteer truck driver from Brantford—your riding, Mr. Speaker—picked up 40 completed bikes, 10 of which are destined for an orphanage in Cuba. They've already received an overjoyed thanks by email from the father of the one of the recipients expressing his gratitude.

The initiative's ultimate goal is to give a bicycle to every child in Cuba who can't afford one. They rely on donations of used bicycles to make this a reality.

Doctors Without Borders has offered the initial space for 100 bikes in a shipping container bound for Cuba, so they are calling upon the community to donate old or used bikes to help fill the container.

It is truly heartwarming to hear about this project happening right in my own riding, and I'd like to be able to commend Aubrey Foley and Kathleen Cosby for their incredible charitable work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Brantford truckers can get it all the way to Cuba.

That's over everyone's head. Don't worry about it.

#### **SENIORS**

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to talk about last Friday's visit by the Premier to my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. The Premier visited Shepherd Village, a large seniors' complex in my riding.

I want to acknowledge Brock Hall, Christine Hopwood and all the staff at Shepherd Village for the excellent work they do for the seniors they care for at Shepherd Village, as well as across Scarborough.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier and I chatted with the residents and staff at Shepherd Village, we heard that our government's commitment to seniors' care is making a positive difference in our community.

In 2012, Dr. Samir Sinha produced the Ontario Seniors Strategy. We listened; now we are taking action. We're working to ensure our seniors are living healthier, safer, and living in a community that meets their needs. We are committed to providing more access to home care through the additional three million personal support worker hours for seniors in need.

Through the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, seniors are now eligible to claim up to \$10,000 worth of home renovation on their tax return to help them with the costs of improving the safety and accessibility in their home. Recently, we rolled out the Seniors Community Grant Program to support initiatives that improve community engagement for seniors across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that our government is working together with our community to make Ontario the best place to grow up as well as to grow old.

#### **CRAFT BREWERIES**

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I rise in this House today to recognize two excellent craft brewers that are based in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Recently, during the annual Speakers' craft brewers' event at Queen's Park that was held on St. Patrick's Day, members of the provincial Legislature and staff of the Legislature voted across a number of categories. Some 23 of Ontario's craft breweries were on hand, with 87 varieties competing in the annual event. The results of the voting are now in.

I'm pleased to congratulate the Highlander Brew Co. from South River in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka that was the winner in the "refreshing ale" category for its Lion Grass beer. As well, the Lake of Bays Brewing Company, located in Baysville, was voted the winner with their Spark House Red Ale, which topped the "malty dark lager or ale" category.

I'm proud to say that these two breweries are growing, and, along with other Ontario craft brewers, are making a significant contribution to Ontario's economy and creating jobs throughout Parry Sound–Muskoka and across the province.

I look forward to their continued success, and I again want to congratulate the Highlander Brew Co. and the Lake of Bays Brewing Company on their award-winning ales.

#### MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. John Vanthof: On March 15, I organized a round table discussion with the mayors and reeves of central Temiskaming and the leader of the Ontario NDP, Andrea Horwath. It was a raw, windy day, but, despite the blustery weather, there were reps from across the area. We had an excellent discussion regarding the issues that municipalities are facing in my riding and across the north.

Some of the major topics of discussion were: MPAC and ARB appeals, which were brought up first. The retroactivity of the appeals process is very difficult to deal with. It's one thing for an appeal to impact projected revenue, but it's very hard for municipalities to budget to reimburse taxes that have already been spent.

Provincial downloading and cancellation of programs were brought up several times. The cancellation of the Connecting Link Program is a serious blow to many towns, and other cases of downloading were also highlighted, from parks to wildlife management.

Energy was also a hot topic of discussion. Issues ranged from the local contractors who are not being paid for their work on the Canadian Solar farm to the siting of projects on agricultural land and the problems with billing by Hydro One.

The proposed new billing model for OPP services was top of mind for many townships. Under the model, their costs are projected to go up by, in some cases, more than 300%. This increase was seen as unsustainable, and it was felt that a better solution must be found.

Connectivity with the rest of the province continues to be a crucial issue. Highway maintenance, the ONTC and air service were the focus of much discussion.

On behalf of Andrea, I'd like to thank the municipalities that took the time to inform her about issues important to their constituents. I hope to be able to arrange similar round tables in the north and south parts of my riding as well.

#### **EMERGENCY RESPONDERS**

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to acknowledge the heroic efforts of over 120 firefighters, police officers, paramedics and MOE emergency personnel who responded to a six-alarm fire in my riding on Thursday. The six-alarm fire saw over four fire pumpers in the sky with their cannons. There were crews that worked for 24 hours on the site to control this fire in a mattress factory. Luckily, we had an excellent first-hand response from our firefighters and all of our front-line emergency responders.

I would also like to give special thanks to the police: Staff Sergeant Mike Matic, who, on the last day before he retires, was there, helping control the crowd; and staff inspector Baptist from 13 division. There were senior environmental officers from MOE—Sarah Proud and Charlie Tajnay were there—and Toronto EMS.

I would like to, again, give special thanks to the amazing firefighters who were up on these ladders, hundreds of feet in the air, with smoke that you could see all the way to King City. They were there, again, for 24 hours, for one of the worst fires we've ever seen in the middle of Toronto. Thankfully, no one was seriously hurt and all that was damaged was the building.

Again, we sometimes forget how important these first-line responders are. We thank them for their great work.

#### TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As you know, Ontario is the epicentre for contraband tobacco in Canada, and it is currently estimated that one quarter of all tobacco sold in Ontario is of the contraband variety. Illegal cigarettes are a prime source for youth smoking and make a mockery of price and access control efforts.

In addition, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimates that in Ontario alone, the provincial and federal governments lose as much as \$1.1 billion annually to missing tax revenues from the contraband tobacco trade.

We know that illegal cigarettes fund criminal activities in our communities, and because of this, it is clear: The province of Ontario needs to do more to control the flow and supply of contraband tobacco. As you know, it has been nearly three years since the government passed Bill 186, the Supporting Smoke-Free Ontario by Reducing Contraband Tobacco Act. This legislation could help disrupt the manufacture of illegal cigarettes, but it is essentially useless because the Ministry of Finance has failed to finalize regulations for its full implementation.

Contraband tobacco is a cash cow for organized crime, and it's a huge problem affecting communities across my

riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Today I join a number of community organizations in calling on the government to do more to stop and prevent the sale and manufacture of contraband tobacco all across the province of Ontario.

#### **BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm pleased today to rise and update members of this House regarding an event that's taking place in my wonderful community of Vaughan this coming Thursday. April 3 will mark the 25th annual Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Awards.

For over 30 years, the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce has been an essential part of the business community, providing services to both small and large organizations. These critical supports have helped businesses grow and have provided them with the tools they need to thrive and prosper. This annual awards event allows us to recognize and celebrate business excellence in Vaughan, and it truly exemplifies my community's support for key industries and also for small businesses—principles not unlike those demonstrated in our government's plan for the economy.

I want to thank the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce for their dedicated commitment to our business community, and I also want to specifically congratulate Mr. Rudy Bratty on his receiving, this coming Thursday, the Philanthropic Business Person of the Year award for the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, as well as all the other winners who will be receiving awards this coming Thursday at the event.

I want to thank and congratulate the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce staff, board and volunteers on what I know will be, as always, a truly amazing event that I look forward to attending.

## **CUB SCOUTS**

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I would like to start this statement with a promise:

"I promise to do my best,

"To love and serve God, to do my duty to the Queen;

"To keep the law of the Wolf Cub pack,

"And to do a good turn for somebody every day."

Mr. Speaker, that is the promise by the Cub Scouts of Canada, and I was fortunate enough, during the March break, to have the 13th St. Thomas Cub Scouts visit my office on a hike.

It was really interesting that day; they did an outdoor hike, but instead of going out into the woods and seeing nature, they came to downtown St. Thomas and visited their political leaders. They stayed and toured my office for a good hour, asked many intriguing questions, and we got along quite well before they headed out the door to see the city of St. Thomas's mayor, Heather Jackson.

The Cub Scout program focuses on six activity areas: the natural world, outdoors, creative expression, healthy living, home and community, and Canada and the world. Activities include: challenging hikes, weekend camps and outdoor activities; water activities like canoeing and kayaking; games and sports; model-building; and music, storytelling and play-acting.

I want to thank them for coming to visit me at my office, and I would also like to take the time to thank the volunteer Cub Scout leaders for helping and teaching and guiding our young folks of the next generation who will be there to take care of us when we're in our elderly years.

The last thing I want to leave you with is the motto: Do your best. I hope that we're all here at the Legislature doing our best for our constituents of Ontario.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (STRIKE AND LOCKOUT INFORMATION), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES GRÈVES ET LES LOCKOUTS)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 184, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to information relating to strikes and lock-outs / Projet de loi 184, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne les renseignements sur les grèves et les lockouts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday, March 30, marked the first anniversary of Peter Kormos's passing. I didn't want to let the day go by without mentioning his name, and without doing a little something for him.

People who knew him would remember that he always had on the docket an anti-scab bill; that was something that he would present at every Legislature. This bill is a whole lot more timid; all it asks for is to identify when temporary replacement workers are used, but I thought it would have made him happy. I miss him greatly, and this bill is for him.

# STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

# NATIONAL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES DAY

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** I am pleased to make a statement on behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on

the 25th anniversary of National Aboriginal Languages Day.

1320

Speaker, boozhoo, bonjou, tunngasugit. Today marks Canada's 25th annual National Aboriginal Languages Day. National Aboriginal Languages Day was established by the Assembly of First Nations in 1989 to raise awareness about aboriginal people's languages and to support their preservation.

Speaker, aboriginal languages are significant to our country's great heritage. The name Canada comes from "kanata," the Ojibway word for village. Ontario stems from the Huron word "Onatari:io" meaning beautiful

lake.

Languages are integrally linked to all of our cultures. There are more than 60 aboriginal languages spoken across Canada. They carry with them the spirit, history and philosophy of a people, and they transmit their culture to future generations. However, only three are currently considered safe from extinction: Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut.

The revival and preservation of aboriginal languages is not only important for First Nations, Métis and Inuit,

but for all the people of Ontario.

Ontario's curriculum offers studies in seven First Nation languages: Cayuga, Cree, Delaware, Mohawk, Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Oneida. These classes are available to all students who want to learn an aboriginal language.

Last year, almost 6,650 elementary and secondary school students were enrolled in the aboriginal language programs and courses in our public schools throughout the province. This includes students enrolled in the Ojibway classes in the northern boards such as the Algoma District School Board and at urban schools in the Toronto District School Board.

Mr. Speaker, on National Aboriginal Languages Day our government joins with the First Nations, Inuit and Métis in recognizing the efforts of individuals and organizations to revive and preserve aboriginal languages.

There are not too many places, unfortunately, in southern Canada where you can learn to speak Inuktitut, but the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre is one of them where you can learn that language. Classes there are helping to create a new generation of Inuktitut speakers, connecting Inuit children and youth with their culture and their elders through language.

The University of Toronto's aboriginal studies department offers courses that provide opportunities for aboriginal and non-aboriginal students to learn about indigenous people's cultures, histories and traditions. A key feature of their program is its commitment to aboriginal language instruction. One of its affiliates, the Indigenous Language Initiative, promotes language learning in Ojibway, Oneida and Inuktitut.

The Métis Nation of Ontario has created a collection of resources to help Métis youth reconnect with their heritage language, Michif. This includes a series of videos with phrases and pronunciations, in addition to

audio and text resources. As you've probably seen by now, I should have taken some of those lessons to get some of those aboriginal languages in.

Interjection: There's always time, John.

Hon. John Gerretsen: There may still be time yet.

Six Nations Polytechnic is home to the Indigenous Knowledge Centre. The centre works collaboratively with indigenous knowledge guardians to collect information about cultural history for the benefit of aboriginal communities. One of its key projects is the preservation of Haudenosaunee languages.

Mr. Speaker, it is exciting to know there are opportunities available across the province to learn aboriginal

languages.

I'd like to take just a moment—I think all of us in the House can do that—to thank these unsung heroes. Their work is supporting language preservation and strengthening the aboriginal cultures and traditions that are part of the foundation and the future of Canada and Ontario.

I encourage all of the people of Ontario to spend some time on National Aboriginal Languages Day-today, March 31-to learn a few words in an aboriginal language. It helps all of us to recognize the importance that the aboriginal communities and nations have played and continue to play in this great province. Let us respect that this is due to the founding peoples of this land and adhere to the treaties and obligations that have been signed with the aboriginal nations.

Speaker, there are resources available in the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Twitter account and Facebook page.

Thank you. Miigwetch. Nia:wen. Marsé. Nakurmiik.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nya:weh. It's now time for responses.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the minister on National Aboriginal Languages Day. I'm pleased to rise in this House today on behalf of the PC caucus and leader, Tim Hudak, to recognize National Aboriginal Languages Day.

Founded by the Assembly of First Nations in 1989, this year marks the 25th anniversary of National Aboriginal Languages Day in Canada. The 2011 Canadian census reports over 60 First Nations languages spoken in Canada, falling into 12 distinct language categories.

Language is central to culture. As we discuss the preservation of culture, it becomes more necessary to also look to preserving language. This will undoubtedly be a difficult task, as the number of elders in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities limit the ability for these languages to be passed on. In many cases, the oral tradition associated with the passing on of these languages adds to the difficulty of bringing these traditions to younger generations.

I would be remiss to not acknowledge the fact that First Nations languages suffered through the residential school system. There are constant reminders that First Nations children were forced to speak and work in English or French, with students being punished for speaking in their mother tongues.

New technology provides hope for the preservation of Canada's First Nations languages. Specifically, with the capability for online archiving and remote learning with the expansion of Internet access, there is much greater hope of ensuring that these aboriginal languages are preserved and passed on to future generations.

As was pointed out by the minister, the Métis have developed some programs to help promote the Michif language. Michif is the language of the Métis people. Once spoken all across the homeland, like most aboriginal languages, the number of Michif speakers declined due to the colonization process that attempted to stamp out the use of languages other than English and French.

Efforts are now under way to preserve Michif and introduce Métis youth to their heritage language. As part of that effort, the Métis Nation of Ontario has created online Michif resources. These include online audio and video files to help preserve—and educate new individuals to—the Michif language. This technology could certainly be used for First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages.

I'm pleased to represent a riding that has some seven First Nations and Métis, including the Dokis First Nation, Henvey Inlet First Nation, Magnetawan First Nation, the Pottawatomi of Moose Deer Point First Nation, Shawanaga First Nation, Wasauksing First Nation and the Wahta Mohawk First Nation.

Seeing as I have the floor, I would like to congratulate the Wahta Mohawks' newly elected chief, Philip Franks, on his election, which was held recently, on March 15.

Miigwetch. Nia:wen. Marsé. Nakurmiik.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Miigwetch.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It is an honour to stand up and speak on behalf of the New Democratic caucus to mark National Aboriginal Languages Day. This day was established in 1989 by the Assembly of First Nations to support aboriginal languages across our country.

It is important not only because it preserves culture and helps strengthen one's identity, but because it helps to preserve the history of our nation's first peoples. There are more than 60 indigenous languages in Canada, which represent 12 distinct language families. Approximately 1.4 million people identify as aboriginal in Canada, representing 4.3% of the total Canadian population. With each new report, this number is growing.

1330

As an MPP who represents nearly 50 First Nation communities, I have been very fortunate to be in close contact and witness first-hand the sharing of this vital link to our past. Aboriginal peoples, through their language and oral storytelling, have conveyed thousands of years of accumulated knowledge. Through art and expression, we have seen much of their important connection to the natural world passed on from generation to generation.

However, in more recent history, aboriginal languages and culture have become threatened and weakened through things like residential schools and other assimilation policies. In some cases, children faced severe punishment for speaking their First Nation languages. Being cut off from their families, they lost the ability to speak their mother tongue and pass it along to their own children.

In the words of the Assembly of First Nations' national chief, Shawn A-in-chut Atleo: "As with all civilizations our languages, cultures and ceremonies and histories are the foundations for our identities."

Preserving aboriginal languages means supporting access to immersion programs, language teachings, cultural camps and access to traditional languages within all learning environments, including training of language teachers in our schools and institutions.

To this end, we appreciate the role that the Assembly of First Nations, the Chiefs of Ontario, treaty organizations and our First Nations leaders have played. Other significant contributors to the preservation of aboriginal languages are the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, Aboriginal Voices magazine, Windspeaker, Tekawennake, Wawatay Native Communications Society including Seven magazine, which is a quarterly publication aimed at sharing and promoting First Nations culture among youth.

In addition, there are many independent initiatives taking place, such as the new development of a webbased interactive First Nations language portal featuring dictionary and curriculum-based resources for Cree language in Canada, and the commitment of individual communities such as Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug to the preservation of First Nation culture through their newly created youth leadership program, which will increase awareness about First Nations culture, issues and living conditions in northern communities.

The fact is, much of the preservation of these languages relies on the commitment and supports that we all provide to preserve it. Today, on National Aboriginal Languages Day, we celebrate and honour the strength and endurance of aboriginal languages and culture. This day recognizes the need to revitalize and seek ways to sustain traditional languages, First Nation identity and our history as a nation. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. Nya:weh.

#### **PETITIONS**

### WIND TURBINES

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental effects, bird and bat kills, property losses, the tearing apart of families, friends and communities, and unprecedented costs;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk with Milana.

#### HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in northwestern Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this and will affix my signature and give it to page Calvin to deliver.

### AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I would like to thank Rooney Feeds Limited in Kemptville for this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding postsecondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Samantha.

### **GASOLINE PRICES**

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from M^{me} Lynne St-Jean from Naughton, in my riding, as well as Mrs. Monic Monahan from Gogama. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Milana to bring it to the clerk.

#### USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which has been duly signed and endorsed by Clerk Todd Decker. It reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies:

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties:

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

In agreement whereof I affix my signature and send it to you proudly via page Nusaybah.

## FISHING REGULATIONS

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the cur-

rent fishing regulations; and

"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

"Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in

remote areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years' quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I affix my signature in full support.

## MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to" benefit from them;

"Whereas Ontario's Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

"Whereas these exceptions ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-

bly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Eli to deliver to the table.

1340

## **USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** J'ai une pétition ici, adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

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"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree, Speaker, affix my signature and send it to you via page Divya.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm pleased to present this petition from the community of Mildmay:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and I'll

send it to the desk with Simon.

#### FIREFIGHTERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters' Association, their Sudbury local. It reads as follows:

"Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the

lives and property of fellow citizens; and

"Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities; and

"Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the general

population ..."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA), 1997 to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it

and ask page Jane to bring it to the Clerk.

### **USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have

fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite

technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of

technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully

embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree, Speaker, affix my signature and send it to you via page Mira.

## PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas current community care access centre personal support worker guidelines do not provide a clear indication of whether PSWs are allowed to support patients' activities outside the home; and

"Whereas patient health is best ensured through an active, healthy lifestyle that may involve activities out-

side the patient's home; and

"Whereas the spirit of community care includes patient access to their community's healthy lifestyle resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact all necessary statutes that would allow personal support workers and other community care access centre staff to support their patients and clients both in the home and in necessary activities in their communities."

I will agree with this and sign it for page Jane.

### **DENTAL CARE**

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas thousands and thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to do all in its power to stop dental funds from being diverted to support other programs and to fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Samantha to bring it to the table.

#### **USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have

fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

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technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested

parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree, will sign it and send it to you via page Eli.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

# YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 19, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

**M**^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. Well, I guess it's my turn to do my lead on Bill 131.

This bill was first introduced on November 18 of last year. This is a bill that is extremely important and this is a bill that has wide support throughout Ontario to ban candy-flavoured tobacco in our province. I'm happy to be doing my lead today, but I sure wish we didn't have to wait four and a half months to move on with something like this.

1350

You see, Speaker, flavoured tobacco is something that I have been working on since 2008. In 2008, myself and

the Speaker—not you; Speaker Levac—introduced a cosponsored bill that did just that: It banned flavoured cigarillos. The bill was one of the first ones put forward as a co-sponsored bill, and it actually went through. It received first, second and third reading and royal assent, and it became law in Ontario. We were both very proud that something like this had been supported. That was back six years ago, in 2008.

By the time the act came into effect—because there was a little bit of a delay between the time it received royal assent and the time that the people in Ontario had to adjust-the tobacco companies had already found a loophole. The loophole was quite simple. They took the little, single cigarillo that had been defined in the act as best as we could—it contained a total gram of tobacco to say that it was a cigarillo, not a full cigar, that we were talking about, because the full cigars have not been targeted to kids as much. They're targeting other people with it. But, to make a long story short, by the time it came into effect, the tobacco industry was ready. They had found a loophole in the bill, increased the number of grams of tobacco in their cigarillo, and continued to sell under the same name brand, the same packaging, the same price—the same everything. If you put the old product, which I still have in my office, beside the new product, which is how they found a loophole, you need to have a pretty sharp eye to see the difference between the two, because to you and me it looks pretty much identi-

Since then, I have been working really hard to try to close that loophole, to try to ban flavouring in tobacco, which clearly targets our youth. It hasn't been easy, and I have introduced different versions of this bill six times. But I was happy that in February of this year, my bill, Bill 149, actually went through. It passed second reading with unanimous support from this House. So we know that in this House, like in the rest of the province, there is really strong support to bring that kind of legislation forward.

Given all of this, given that we know that Ontarians want this, that we've already had a similar bill go through the House and reach second reading, it is a little bit disheartening to see that here we are four and a half months after the minister has introduced her bill, and I'm just doing my lead. Doing my lead means that it's the first time the bill is tabled in a way that allows us to talk about it. With something that has such great support, you would have thought that my lead would have been done way back in November, but it wasn't. It took a lot of work from the cancer society and from many people who are opposed to flavouring in tobacco to move that ahead.

It shouldn't be that hard, Mr. Speaker. When there is support within this House, when there is huge support within our society, why is it that the Legislative Assembly is so, so slow? Why is it that volunteer organizations have to come here and talk to pretty well every single one of us to show us how important it is to move on this issue? But it even took a letter to the editor in the Toronto Star to finally get this bill back on the docket so that

we can talk about it. It leaves me with a feeling that they're not that committed to this. They say yes when they're pushed in that direction, and they say the right thing when they're speaking, but their actions speak way louder than their words, and their action right now is saying that four and a half months later is sort of a good time to talk about this bill again. Well, not to me, Speaker; not to me.

Sometimes you dream as to what could be. Well, life in Ontario could be quite, quite different when you look at things like the fact that three million people worldwide die every year because of tobacco use. Right here in our province, 36 people today and every single day will die because they were smokers. If you look at the population at large, about 20% of Ontarians are smokers. Well, that 20% of Ontarians who are smokers are the 90% who will die of lung cancer. Lung cancer is not a fun disease to fight, but for the 20% of smokers in Ontario, 90% of them who get the disease will die. Of all of the lung cancers that are diagnosed in our province—and unfortunately, there are tens of thousands of them every year—90% of those diagnoses come from that 20% of people who smoke.

If you look at all cancers, and we know there are hundreds of thousands of people who receive a diagnosis of cancer, 30% of all cancers are directly linked to people who smoke. If you look at things like chronic bronchitis, emphysema, you could wipe out 80% of the people with chronic bronchitis or emphysema if people stopped smoking. Twenty-five per cent of heart disease or strokes—those can be pretty debilitating diseases and handicaps. Having a stroke that affects your right side usually also affects your speech. It becomes a very difficult recovery when not only is half of your body paralyzed so that you cannot use it, but you also cannot communicate. Twenty-five per cent of strokes and heart disease would be wiped out if people stopped smoking.

Why am I going through all of those statistics? Because the people in this House have an opportunity to change it. The people in this House have an opportunity to move this bill forward so that it becomes reality and so that the next generation of smokers doesn't start.

We all know that a cigarette contains nicotine. Nicotine—a bit like heroin—breaks what we call the blood-brain barrier. It affects the brain. But did you know that nicotine is actually more addictive than cocaine? Nicotine is more addictive than heroin, so it is really, really easy to get hooked.

Why am I talking to you about this? It's very simple: because the products that we want to ban, the flavoured tobacco products that we want to ban, are there because they want to hook the next generation of smokers. For somebody who is already hooked on nicotine, they don't want the cherry flavours anymore and they certainly don't want the bubble gum or the candy floss flavour anymore; they want the nicotine. The nicotine is what will call you back 30 times a day to light another one.

Interjection.

 $\mathbf{M}^{\mathrm{me}}$  France Gélinas: Sorry. No, this is not a smoker's cough. That was not funny.

#### 1400

So all of those kids who will have a buck to look cool, a buck to go and buy a flavoured cigarillo so that they can carry it in their backpack, so that they can try to fit in with the cool crowd—what the industry is really doing is making sure that they get addicted to nicotine. Once you're addicted, then they don't have to worry anymore: You will find the money someplace to buy the next pack. Once you're addicted, it's not the single flavoured cigarillo that you will crave. It is the nicotine, and you will find this, and you will do what needs to be done so you get your next fix of tobacco.

Anybody who has tried to quit will soon realize the very unpleasant withdrawal symptoms that come once you're addicted to nicotine and you try to stop. What's the easy route? Well, the easy route is to continue to light up, which is what the industry is hoping for.

Interjection.

M^{me'} France Gélinas: Sorry, let me try again. I don't want any comments from the gallery either.

Basically, this is the core of what the bill will do. The bill will do more than that, though, and those are all measures that we support. The bill will prohibit the selling of promotional items with tobacco products, which is something that is kind of picking up speed. You buy a pack of cigarettes, and you get a free lighter with something cool on it or a pack with something on it—it would ban this. It would broaden the ability of an inspector to enter a place where it is prohibited to smoke, a place that manufactures or a wholesale distributor of retail tobacco or a place where an inspector has reasonable grounds to believe that a prohibited activity is taking place. It also doubles the fine for those who sell tobacco to youth, which unfortunately is still happening in this province.

It would allow for testing of tobacco in water pipes, or hookah pipes, which is a practice that is gaining in popularity with our youth. Unfortunately, this is also another way where youth get addicted. You don't need a whole lot of nicotine before you're addicted.

It's always weird to think that a product that has over 4,000 different chemicals in it—40 of them are known cancérigènes; that is, they give you cancer.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Carcinogens.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Carcinogenic? That was the French translation for you there.

They are actually inhaled by people every day. If you would ask people to take a pill that has all of those chemicals in them, people would refuse because of the harm it would do to their health, but they're willing to inhale them 30 times a day—or whatever number of cigarettes they do smoke.

The bill also has some regulations. The regulations will prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, sports surfaces and sports spectator areas within a 20-metre radius, except if there's a private dwelling. This is the kind of regulation that's already in place in a number of municipalities. So I would say the province is playing catch-up right now with a number of municipalities,

including my own in Sudbury, where such a bylaw has already been put in place.

It prohibits smoking in all covered and uncovered restaurants, bars and patios, except for a few Legion halls that have been exempt. This is because, right now, if summer ever comes and we get to go and sit at a patio again without a nine-foot snowbank surrounding us, you will see that they are now captive of people who smoke. You go on to any restaurant patio anywhere in Ontario, and a lot of people who are smokers decide to smoke there, which really makes it almost impossible for a family who does not want to be exposed to second-hand smoke to also enjoy the patio. So to bring a little bit of fairness to it, and to encourage people to quit-I am not denying this—I would like those measures to be in place, because not only do we not want the next generation of smokers to pick up the habit, but it would be good to support people who do have the habit and are trying to quit. Making it harder and harder is certainly one way to do this.

It would prohibit the sale of tobacco on postsecondary education campuses, in schools and in day nurseries. So if there is a convenience store within a university or a college campus etc., no more tobacco. It prohibits smoking on specific provincial government properties, similar to Ontario public services, and it prohibits smoking on outdoor hospital grounds, except in areas designated by the hospital board.

We've already come a long way in Ontario with smoke-free. I started my career working in hospitals, and I remember when people used to smoke in hospitals. I remember we used to have smoking rooms and norsmoking rooms. You would walk into a smoking room, and if somebody was bedridden, you were guaranteed that all around that bed you could see burn marks on the floor where cigarettes had fallen off and burned through, basically, the tiles or carpet or whatever was around the bed. I remember lighting up cigarettes for people who were bedridden when I started my career. People would now think, "Really? You have people with oxygen and you have people with all kinds of respiratory diseases." But that was then. Now we wouldn't think of smoking in our hospitals; we know better.

I think those next steps are pretty much in line with making more and more public places smoke-free so that the norm for recreation and for socialization is not around a cigarette anymore; it's in a smoke-free environment, whether it be on a sports field, on hospital grounds, on school grounds, or at a college, university or day nursery etc. So we're changing the social norm, which is a big part of helping people quit, and also preventing new smokers from picking up the habit.

When we talk about tobacco and smoking, it is good to review the facts and the impact—I've talked a little bit about the impact of tobacco, but things like the fact that it costs the Ontario economy about \$1.6 billion in health care annually. This is a lot of money, \$1.6 billion, that we wouldn't have to spend anymore. That results in \$4.4 billion in lost productivity, and it also results in about

half a million hospital stays—so 500,000 hospital days are used in our hospitals directly linked to people being sick because they are smokers.

We also know that exposure to second-hand smoke causes major damage to our children. We now go into a school and it is not rare to see a third of the kids in every single class having asthma. Part of this is linked to the damage that is done to lung development in children that are exposed to second-hand smoke. As well, there are a lot of middle-ear problems. When you have kids that have earache after earache, they are often from a family where people smoke in the house and they are exposed to second-hand smoke.

Smoking during pregnancy also increases the risk of complications such as miscarriage, premature delivery, low birth weight, infant stillbirth, and sudden infant death syndrome—none of them good. The way to prevent this is to make sure the next generation doesn't start to smoke and to help the people that are smokers quit the habit. In adults, tobacco use is responsible for lung disease, heart disease, lung cancer and many others.

#### 1410

In our hospital in Sudbury, they have a special clinic just for what we call COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. If you look at them, Sudbury is no better, no different than anybody else. Between 80% and 90% of the people there are smokers or in some cases, by the time they are severe enough to come to the clinic, become ex-smokers. Just think of the difference it would make if we could make sure that the next generation does not pick up the habit. That 80% to 90% of the people with COPD would fall to 10%, which would make a huge, huge difference for them and for our health care system.

If you look at youth in grades 6 to 9, and maybe the Minister of Education is interested in that, 8.7% of them have tried smoking. If you try the grades 10 to 12, it rises to 34% of them having tried smoking. Unfortunately, the smoking rates are the highest in young adults, that is, between the ages of 20 and 24. This is where the highest province-wide rate of smokers sits, at about 22%. It is a sad reality, with everything we know about smoking, that we still see young people picking up the habit.

That brings us back to our bill. One of the reasons is that they got addicted. This one, fun-looking package that you carried in your backpack to look cool that contained a flavoured cigarillo—well, it doesn't matter that if we were to give them just a regular cigar, most of them wouldn't be able to smoke it. It tastes pretty bad. It not only gives you bad breath for a week, but if you're not a smoker, it's pretty hard to smoke one of those. Once you add the flavouring in there, it makes it way easier, and a lot of youth will be able to smoke the full cigarillo. They will get a full charge of nicotine. That nicotine—it doesn't take long before you get the addiction. The nicotine will keep calling you back.

If this bill passes, and I sure hope that it does, it would bring Ontario closer to the high standard set by British Columbia's Tobacco Control Act. It would also streamline the bylaws passed by dozens of municipalities in Ontario that already prohibit smoking in parks, patios, government buildings etc.

Since 2008, when the Speaker and I introduced a ban on flavoured cigarillos, a lot has happened. The industry has really expanded the number of flavours that exist, that could not even be thought of, but all of them have something in common. All of them are meant to target youth with a lot of candy flavours, a lot of drink-based—appletinis and those kinds of flavours really go after the youth so that they take their first puff, they get the nicotine rush and then they come back, because the nicotine is telling them to come back.

When the changes happened, the cigarillos themselves, as I say, except for being a little bit bigger—they smell the same, the packages were the same, the price was the same and, more importantly, the marketing was the same. The tobacco industry recognizes a money-maker when they see one, and they knew that they had found one with the flavoured cigarillo. So I hope that today we will finish the job to help protect youth from becoming the next generation of smokers and ban this flavoured cigarillo.

There's a difference between what the government is putting forward and what I am putting forward. My bill, Bill 149, not only bans flavoured cigarillos, flavoured tobacco, it also puts a ban on new tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco. I don't know if any of you follow little league baseball, but if you go to the 15-to-24 age groups that play ball, I guarantee you on every single one of those benches you will find chew. Chew is flavoured chewing tobacco. It comes in all sorts of flavours, and I guarantee you every single one of those benches has it. They do the same thing: They deliver nicotine. Nicotine breaks the blood-brain barrier to deliver the addition. Once you're addicted to nicotine, you will do what needs to be done to get your fix, or live with withdrawal, which most people don't find they want to put up with, so they light up again.

My bill looks at what we call smokeless. There are all sorts of different chews that exist. There is snuff also, which is used lots in Europe and is trying to make its way into Ontario. It's basically a little pouch of finely, finely ground tobacco that you keep in your mouth. Some people keep that in their mouth for 12 hours a day, and they forever have this slow release of nicotine through the snuff—again, a habit that has not come into Ontario yet. I would much rather it did not come.

Same thing: They have teeny-weeny little mints. Everybody knows what a Tic Tac looks like, the little mint. They look pretty much like a Tic Tac but, again, they are finely, finely ground tobacco; and they do the same—some of those little Tic Tacs will deliver four times the amount of nicotine that a cigarette would give you. They all do the same. If you start with those little mints, there's also a new product being tested that looks a bit like a toothpick. You use it like a toothpick except that it delivers, again, nicotine, and it delivers this addiction. People will tell you, "Oh, but it's better that they

chew tobacco than smoking it." No, it's better that you don't use nicotine at all and it's better that you don't get addicted at all.

My bill really looks at banning flavoured, not only in smoke tobacco but also in smokeless tobacco, so that you don't get addicted to nicotine. It doesn't take long, once you're addicted, that you will find your way to the smoking kind. The same thing goes for people saying, "Oh, yes, but it will help me quit." None of this has been substantiated by any research. There's no body of evidence that shows that if you introduce those nicotine-based products you will help people quit. But I can guarantee something, though: that as people start to use those products, the chances that they will become smokers go up through the rafters. They're not products that I want brought into our province.

We already have quite a few good products to help people quit. Some of those products are available in our health units, at the community health centres, from our family health teams. They're available free of charge for a lot of people. And there are health care professionals who will be there to help you quit. We don't need nicotine-based new products under the disguise that it will help them quit. We have products to help them quit that are not as dangerous as bringing in new nicotine-based products and hoping that they help people quit, while the risk of getting people addicted to nicotine is real and is a clear and imminent danger I would call.

#### 1420

If we focus specifically on flavoured tobacco, there was a study done in October 2013. A report that was released, the Youth Smoking Survey, showed that 57,000 grade 6 to grade 12 Ontario youth used flavoured tobacco products in the year 2010-11. The report was just released, though, this past year. Fifty-seven thousand youth had tried flavoured tobacco products, and we know a great big number of them will become smokers. It is time that we take this off the shelves. There is no reason to have this on our shelves in Ontario.

I know that the cigar industry is always very worried when we talk about banning flavouring, but if you look at the package that they come in, there is no way that an adult would buy that kind of thing and throw them in their tackle box on their way out to a fishing trip. They are made for kids. They are packages that look like you're buying candy or you're buying a Fruit Roll-Up. It certainly does not look like you are bringing a cigar to wherever you want to go with your cigar.

Of those kids who have tried them, in the last 30 days, 14% of them had reported that they also tried cigarette smoking. So to go from one to the next was quite easy, and we're finding that. The response to the findings of those different studies was immediate. They want us to ban, eliminate, flavour in all tobacco products.

There is a youth group that has started to advocate for this. They used to be called Flavour Gone and now they have changed their name to Freeze the Industry. I encourage you to Google Freeze the Industry because they have some pretty out-there YouTube videos. They

wear those little suits where they are one colour from top to bottom. They look like—I don't know how to describe them, but we've all seen them. It covers the head and the arms; some of them are yellow, some of them are orange, and some of them are green. They all get dressed like this, and they do a pretty nifty video about Flavour Gone. They've also got pens.

I will read you what it says: "Freeze the Industry is advocating for a tobacco moratorium, a ban on all new tobacco products not yet introduced in Canada and an alteration to current products." This is a bunch of youth. They started in Ottawa, but they have membership throughout Ontario now, and they are asking us to act. Why are they doing this? Because they see their peers, the youth around them, who are starting to smoke.

They go on to say, "We need a moratorium because the tobacco industry continues to develop new, innovative products that evade and exploit tobacco legislation designed to protect the health of young Canadians; recruit and retain youth and young adults, since 81% of current and former smokers begin smoking before the age of 18—and they appear to be less harmful than existing products when in reality they continue to contain the same dangerous ingredients." They call themselves Freeze the Industry.

Freeze the Industry is a group of youth. Google them, and you will see. They put their message out in a way that is very much youth-targeted, but really, they're talking to us. We are the ones who can freeze the industry. We are the ones who either can pass my bill or the minister's bill to make sure that the flavour will be gone and to make sure that new tobacco-based products won't be allowed into our province. This is the only sure way to ensure that we don't continue to have 90% of our lung cancer deaths attributed to the 20% of the people who smoke, because every time that 20% of smokers gets smaller and smaller, the number of people with cancer, with heart disease, with COPD etc. starts to go down. It is directly linked.

Not only are tobacco companies good at marketing; they are also good at inventing new flavours. I had an intern from OLIP with me last fall. During the constituency week for Remembrance Day, I was able to bring him to my riding. My riding has quite a few First Nations in it with smoke shacks. I was able to bring him there. He had never seen what a smoke shack looked like; he certainly had an opportunity to see quite a few of them in my riding. There, the tobacco products are not behind cupboards. They are in plain view so you can see the number of flavours and the fancy packaging that is put out. It is just unbelievable.

A lot of people will tell you that what we really need to do is to work on illegal tobacco, and I couldn't agree more. More needs to be done regarding illegal tobacco, but that doesn't mean that we cannot also support this bill. It's not because more needs to be done that we don't start someplace. For every step that we take towards the end goal of making sure that youth don't start smoking, or making sure that we make it easier and easier for

people to quit smoking, all of those little steps will bring us to where we want to go.

Specifically about patios: Allowing smoking on patios associates tobacco use with relaxation and socializing with friends. With the bill, the regulation will make patios 100% smoke-free. This tells young adults, who sometimes smoke on patios, that any use of tobacco products—occasional or not—is dangerous. Today's patios are often occupied almost entirely by young smokers, which, as I said, makes it almost impossible for a family with kids to go there or for a non-smoker to enjoy socializing on a patio. So the idea is really to show that smoking, no matter where it is within a public place, is not welcome.

We have right now 100 Ontario municipalities that have passed such a bylaw, that ban smoking in outdoor places such as playgrounds, parks, beaches etc. This number is increasing quickly. To pass this bill with the provision that would ban smoking in municipal places is really to play catch-up, because a huge percentage of the municipalities in Ontario are already there. We would just make it an even playing field for the entire province.

I mentioned that we have 100 municipalities. Well, just two years ago, there were only 50, so you can see that in the last few years the number of municipalities that have joined the ranks of municipalities where you cannot smoke in a variety of outdoor places, such as playgrounds, parks, beaches etc., has grown and continues to grow.

I think it is time for us to get in front of this, to make it easier rather than having many, many other dozens of municipalities having to take on the battles on their own with their own resources. It's a whole lot easier to just make the ban province-wide, and then we save time, effort and energy in all.

1430

"It is widely accepted by experts that there is no riskfree level of exposure to second-hand smoke.... Secondhand smoke is composed of both mainstream smoke, exhaled by the smoker and side-stream smoke from the burning end of the cigarette." This smoke contains 5,000 different chemicals, and 69 of them are carcinogenic. "Second-hand smoke is a known cause of sudden infant death syndrome, asthma and respiratory infection in children and coronary heart disease, lung cancer and emphysema in adults, among other serious health consequences.... According to the US Surgeon General, even low levels of exposure 'lead to a rapid and sharp increase in dysfunction and inflammation of the lining of the blood vessels, which are implicated in heart attacks and stroke...." As I said, having a stroke, whether it's on your right side or left side, can be quite debilitating. The therapy is difficult and not always fully successful. It's a whole lot easier to prevent than to cure.

A recent study specifically for Ontario has showed that banning smoking inside bars has saved the lives of five to seven non-smoking bar workers annually, and has also prevented 90% of those workers from coronary heart disease. This is quite significant, because you have to

realize that whether you used to smoke in restaurants—we don't anymore—if you smoke on a patio, the workers still have to go there. They still have to serve you. They still have to pick up and they still have to clean up. Those people are exposed, and now the body of knowledge that we have on second-hand smoke makes it clearer and clearer that those workers are at risk. They are putting their health at risk; and banning smoking on patios would certainly help those workers in having a safe workplace.

I've talked to you a bit about a letter that was sent to the Toronto Star. It was titled "Whatever the reason for the stall on anti-smoking legislation at Queen's Park, kids are still accessing flavoured tobacco products." I will read part of this into the record. That was a letter penned by Michael Perley, who is the director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco; Martin Kabat, who is the CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division; and Tom McAllister, who is the COO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Those are the people who, basically, want to put pressure on us to do the right thing, and to do the right thing is to make sure we move ahead and pass legislation that bans flavored tobacco. So they go on to say—that was published on March 25, that is, Tuesday of last week—that:

"You'd be hard-pressed to find many subjects today on which all Ontarians agree, but the need to keep tobacco products away from our kids would surely be at the top of the list.

"Since 2003, the current provincial government has been helping build this agreement through legislation, smoking cessation programs, and efforts to prevent kids from getting access to tobacco products. Its latest effort is Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act"—which we are talking about today—"introduced in the legislature by Health Minister Deb Matthews on Nov. 18, 2013.

"The bill is designed to protect kids from deadly, addictive tobacco products. The centrepiece is a ban on all candy and fruit flavours in tobacco products. Outdoor patios—where smoking is still positively linked with relaxation and socializing, and where workers can be exposed to dangerous levels of second-hand smoke—will be made smoke-free.

"Sports fields, playgrounds and hospital grounds would all be made smoke-free. Sales of tobacco will no longer be permitted on university and college campuses. Fines for retail tobacco sales to minors will double. Finally, tobacco enforcement personnel will be able to take further steps against the spread of indoor water pipe smoking. The latter is critical: In the latest survey, more grade 12s are smoking water pipes (19%) than cigarettes (11%)!

"Bill 131 is essential to keeping our kids healthy. But it's also critically important because the overall rate of smoking in Ontario has remained flat (at about 18%) for five years. Aggressive further action is necessary to reduce this deadly incidence of smoking.

"Ontario's major health charities—the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and others—were delighted when Bill 131 was introduced.

We looked forward to the opening debate (called second reading) on the bill's contents in the Legislature. At the same time, we were aware that a possible election this spring might affect the chances for passage of Bill 131.

"As things turned out, we were right to be concerned.

"The fall session of the Legislature ended on December 12 with no further action on Bill 131. With a possible election looming, we decided to poll Ontarians during the Legislature's winter break to see how many supported the bill, and whether a political party's attitude toward its passage would affect their view of that party.

"We found that 76% of Ontarians supported Bill 131. Among those supporters, nearly all (92%) supported the legislation being made a high priority and passed quickly. A majority of that group (54%) strongly supported quick passage. We were both heartened, and not surprised, by these levels of support: Whether smokers or not, all Ontarians want their kids to have a healthy future.

"The Legislature returned to work on February 18, and second reading started on February 19. Unfortunately, it didn't last long; only an hour, not enough time to allow the opposition health critics and other MPPs wishing to speak to have their say. Once again, the process stalled.

"To inject some urgency into the process, we organized a day of action at Queen's Park, in order to meet as many MPPs as possible and urge them to pass the bill. Hundreds of calls went into government and opposition MPPs' offices as well.

"During our day of action, we showed MPPs firsthand the flavoured products that Bill 131 was designed to eliminate. They heard personal stories of survivors' battles with cancer and heart disease caused by smoking. They heard from youth volunteers about the need to protect them and their friends from the predatory marketing tactics of the tobacco industry.

"No matter which party or office we visited, we heard nothing but expressions of support for Bill 131. Yet, unfortunately, the bill hasn't moved an inch since February 19.

"Whatever the reason for the stall in progress, the fact is, kids are still accessing flavoured tobacco products. With the possibility of an election getting closer, our chance to have an immediate impact is fading.

"Let your MPP know that enough is enough, and that the Legislature must pass Bill 131 now, by sending a letter to the Canadian Cancer Society's End the Flavour campaign. Our kids' health depends on it."

I fully agree with this letter, Mr. Speaker. I know that the PC critic for health, the member for Whitby-Oshawa, has not had an opportunity to do her lead, and I sure wish that this bill gets put on to the docket so that we have an opportunity to move it forward.

#### 1440

Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de passer quelques commentaires au sujet du projet de loi 131. Au coeur du projet de loi 131, c'est de s'assurer que le tabac aromatisé sera banni de l'Ontario à tout jamais.

En 2008, j'ai eu le plaisir, avec M. Levac, qui est maintenant le Président de l'Assemblée, de mettre un

projet de loi conjoint. Le projet de loi conjoint était pour bannir le tabac aromatisé de l'Ontario. On était très content lorsque le projet de loi a reçu l'appui de l'Assemblée et est devenu loi.

Par contre, le délai entre la sanction royale et lorsque le projet de loi est venu en effet, l'industrie du tabac avait déjà découvert une échappatoire. L'industrie du tabac avait pris la définition qui existait dans le projet de loi, dans laquelle on définissait de quoi avait l'air un cigarillo aromatisé, avec le nombre de grammes de tabac enroulés d'une feuille, etc. Ils ont pris la définition, ont fait un changement mineur, c'est-à-dire qu'ils ont ajouté un gramme de tabac, et ont continué à vendre des cigarillos aromatisés partout à la grandeur de la province.

Donc, bien qu'on a un projet de loi en bonne et due forme en Ontario qui bannit le tabac aromatisé, étant donné que le projet de loi définit de quoi a l'air un cigarillo aromatisé, ils ont tout simplement trouvé une échappatoire en ne respectant pas la définition telle que dans la loi, et ont continué avec leur effort de marketing à vendre les mêmes produits : les mêmes produits, dans les mêmes dépanneurs, dans les mêmes emballages, exactement de la même façon.

Plusieurs études, certaines dont j'ai parlé aujourd'hui, démontrent clairement que ces produits-là mettent l'emphase sur les jeunes. Les saveurs sont des saveurs qui sont surtout associées à la jeunesse, soit des saveurs genre fruits, bonbons, etc., ou de la boisson, des faveurs du genre pommetini, pour un martini aux pommes, ou des saveurs du genre chocolat, cerise, etc.

Le problème c'est que, bien que les emballages ont l'air d'être des produits pour les enfants, ce qu'il y a à l'intérieur, c'est vraiment le tabac aromatisé. C'est là pour une raison: pour t'aider à prendre ta première cigarette, parce que pour quelqu'un qui ne fume pas, la première cigarette, elle donne pas mal du mal au coeur. Non seulement qu'elle donne une haleine horrible pour les prochaines plusieurs journées, mais ça donne mal au coeur. Avec les produits aromatisés du tabac, ça leur permet de finir leur première cigarette parce qu'elle ne goûte pas aussi mauvais. Mais ce qu'elle fait vraiment, c'est qu'elle va livrer la nicotine.

On sait tous que la nicotine crée la dépendance pire que l'héroïne, pire que la cocaïne. La nicotine brise la barrière entre les vaisseaux sanguins et le cerveau et développe une dépendance très, très rapidement. Donc, l'idée est simple : tu vends pour un dollar un produit qui a l'air d'être un produit pour enfants, qui sent, qui goûte, qui est emballé comme si c'est fait pour être dans le sac à dos de nos enfants, mais qui est là pour une et une seule raison. C'est là pour s'assurer que la prochaine génération de fumeurs et de fumeuses devienne dépendante à la nicotine, pour s'assurer qu'ils vont continuer à vendre leurs produits.

Le problème, bien entendu, c'est que pour les fumeurs et les fumeuses, le risque pour la santé est « astronomical ». Si tu regardes dans les dizaines de milliers de personnes qui vont mourir du cancer du poumon, 90 % d'eux sont des fumeurs ou des fumeuses. Aujourd'hui, en Ontario,

36 personnes vont mourir. Demain et après-demain, puis le jour après, 36 personnes vont mourir, tous les jours en Ontario, pour une et une seule raison : parce qu'elles fumaient.

Donc, le gouvernement a mis beaucoup d'efforts au cours des années pour essayer de diminuer le nombre de personnes qui fument. Les efforts ont eu du succès. On voit maintenant que personne ne penserait à fumer lorsqu'il va à l'hôpital. Personne non plus ne pense allumer une cigarette au travail ou dans un restaurant ou dans un café. Maintenant, ça fait partie des habitudes sociales que les gens ne font pas ça. Si tu vas dans les endroits publics, les gens ne fument pas. Ça, c'est bien.

Le projet de loi nous erumène un pas plus loin parce que pendant les cinq dernières années, bien qu'on avait vu que, lentement mais sûrement, le pourcentage de fumeurs en Ontario diminuait, là on se rend compte que dans les cinq dernières années, le taux de fumeurs et de fumeuses est demeuré le même. À la grandeur de la province, c'est 18 %. Si tu regardes chez les jeunes—puis là on parle des jeunes qui ont le droit de fumer, les jeunes de 20 à 24 ans—ce pourcentage-là est de 22 %. Donc, non seulement qu'on ne voit plus une diminution chez les jeunes, on voit une augmentation.

Ce genre de projet de loi, c'est un projet de loi que je pousse depuis 2008. Depuis la première fois que le projet de loi est devenu loi en Ontario et que les compagnies de tabac ont trouvé des échappatoires, j'essaie de le ramener. En ce moment, c'est un projet de loi du gouvernement qui non seulement bannit l'usage du tabac aromatisé, mais également augmente les endroits publics où on n'aurait pas le droit de fumer pour inclure les patios. Donc, l'été—si jamais l'été arrive—si on va manger dans un patio, les gens n'auraient pas le droit de fumer, et également dans les parcs et les endroits publics, donc autour des parcs et des arénas. Dans les universités, les campus, les collèges et les écoles en général, s'ils ont des dépanneurs sur leur campus, ils n'auraient pas le droit de vendre des produits du tabac. Donc, des petits pas qui nous amènent à continuer d'encourager les gens à arrêter de fumer, mais encore plus important que ça, qui nous assurent que les jeunes ne commenceront pas à fumer.

Le projet de loi, malheureusement, n'inclut pas l'interdiction de nouveaux produits du tabac. On sait que l'industrie du tabac est en train de tester le marketing de plusieurs nouveaux produits du tabac. Moi, j'ai un projet de loi, le projet de loi 149, qui est déjà passé en deuxième lecture et qui non seulement bannit le tabac aromatisé, mais également les nouveaux produits du tabac et les produits du tabac sans fumée. Ce que les jeunes appellent les « chews », c'est vraiment du tabac à chiquer. Il y en a maintenant de toutes les saveurs. Le baseball va recommencer bientôt. Si vous allez voir du baseball mineur—on parle de jeunes de 16 à 25 ans—et vous allez voir sur le banc, je vous garantis que vous allez avoir du tabac de toutes sortes de saveurs.

Ça, c'est la même chose. C'est une façon pour les jeunes—ça a l'air cool, d'avoir ton petit contenant de tabac à chiquer, mais ça donne la même chose. Ça donne

une dépendance à la nicotine, et ça ne prend pas de temps qu'on va d'une dépendance à la nicotine à devenir fumeur ou fumeuse.

Donc, j'aimerais pouvoir ajouter ces clauses-là au projet de loi, ou, tout simplement, ajouter les clauses de la ministre à mon projet de loi qui est déjà passé en deuxième lecture.

New Democrats will be supporting Bill 131. We want this bill to go through, the faster the better. If not this one, then make changes to Bill 149, which has already passed second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Premièrement, je voudrais accueillir quelques invités représentant the Heart and Stroke Foundation, as well as the Canadian Cancer Society. From the Heart and Stroke Foundation we have Cristin Napier and Krista Orendorff, and from the Canadian Cancer Society we have Andrew Noble, Nicole McInerney, and Joanne Di Nardo; I welcome you all. We certainly support all the efforts that you expend and conduct on behalf of the people of Ontario and beyond to reduce the incidence of these very important illnesses that affect us and our families on a day-to-day basis. We certainly support, of course, and we welcome your support of both Heart and Stroke and the Canadian Cancer Society on Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act.

1450

As a physician-parliamentarian, there are perhaps few bills that concord with my own outlook more. We see, unfortunately, more and more youth, despite our various efforts, being lured into unhealthy lifestyles, whether it is obesity and lack of activity and getting too much screen time, or tobacco exposure, or the supposedly free and easy e-cigarettes that are now coming our way. Just as an example, I'll cite for you a New York Times bestseller, Salt Sugar Fat—and we could probably add tobacco to that as well—by Michael Moss, which essentially details how the food industry, the food giants, literally have lured-induced-dependence, addiction, diversion and self-entertainment with these various foods. This is in part what is leading to the epidemic that we see of tobacco-related illnesses and, of course, obesity and type 2 diabetes or, as we call it, the cardiometabolic syndrome. So we certainly support not only the efforts of our guests today, but of this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is absolutely a pleasure to stand today and offer some remarks following my colleague from Nickel Belt. She is always standing up for health care, for which I admire her. I take health care very seriously in my portfolio, regardless of whether it's an official portfolio or not, and this one really strikes a chord with me. I lost my sister Marjorie to lung cancer. She started smoking at a very young age and smoked throughout her life, and it was the most horrible thing in my life I've ever seen. I stood at her bedside with her two

children and watched her pass away. It is something that will stay in my mind forever. If I could paint that picture for every youth who's out there listening today, or not listening, I think it would turn them around to what we believe is something that may be deemed in our adolescence to be cool, and something that a lot of peer pressure forces children into.

My second sister, Bonnie, is closest in age to me, and is actually currently surviving breast cancer. Again, she was a smoker from a young age. I believe there was a lot of peer pressure back in those days—all of my brothers and sisters, with the exception of my oldest sister and myself, have smoked, in our family. Thank goodness my mother didn't; she set a great example. My dad was a smoker and died of emphysema. So again, I think that whole connection is there.

It deplores me when I see youth smoking. It absolutely infuriates me when I see it: a family in a car with young children who have no say in the matter being subjected to that. I believe second-hand smoke is one of the worst things we have. If I had the ability, it would be an outright ban on smoking, period. Some people out there may not like to hear that, but to me it is something that has a huge, huge impact on our health care system. There are people waiting for other surgeries, other forms of prevention or a cure that they can't get because we spend so much money after the fact, after people have spent a lifetime smoking. It all starts, I believe, at that youth age. We really have to put something in place that condemns anybody who is promoting smoking for our youth. Mr. Speaker, we have to do it. I applaud the act and will definitely be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** It is an honour to stand here and speak to this bill on behalf of my constituents, and to follow the passion that my colleague from Nickel Belt has brought to this discussion.

If I heard correctly when she was speaking about Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, 36 people a day die in Ontario from smoking-related causes—36 people a day, and the cost to Ontario's health care system per year, she said, was \$1.6 billion. That's because people smoke; it's legal to smoke. As she pointed out, there are 4,000 chemicals in a cigarette, and 40 of them are known carcinogens.

As I understand it—I'm not an expert, but I'm told by the people who oppose contraband tobacco that the chemicals in contraband tobacco are even worse, if you can imagine, than the 40 in the 4,000 in regular tobacco.

I know it's an addictive habit, and I know if you want to continue to sell your product you've got to come up with a marketing technique to get younger people into the field, younger people to buy your product or, indeed, just convince other people that have been doing it to try something different, and sell more product that way.

I quit smoking about 40 years ago. I smoked in my teens. I've been married almost 40 years, and I quit before that, which is a good thing, I know.

Applause.

## Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you.

I agree with the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. There's nothing that burns my butt more than when I see somebody driving in a car with the windows up, kids in the car seat, and they're smoking away. I've got no respect at all for that.

I wish I had more time, Speaker, but thank you very

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I'm pleased to add my voice in support of Bill 131 and to compliment the member from Nickel Belt on her speech.

I am a smoker, so I want to say that it's important to change the cultural norm, because when I was growing up, we didn't know about all the harmful effects that we know now about tobacco and smoking. There is no reason why our youth, our young people, have to start smoking. The best way to fight this addiction is never to start.

It does take, apparently, numerous attempts to be successful. There's not one day that I get up and I don't think, "I have to quit." I know it's coming. I did quit for five years at one point, so I was successful, but then other stresses in my life brought me to smoke again. But if I did it once, it doesn't mean I can't do it again.

Yes, nicotine is very addictive. I know that because I'm a smoker myself. There are over 4,000 chemicals. I don't know which one I'm addicted to, and that goes for all the other smokers.

We have to protect our young people. As I said, the best way is to never light up. Never light up. If you can avoid it, don't start. I think it's the best way to really promote a healthy population, a healthy new generation. When I was growing up, it was very trendy. My doctor smoked; many of my professors smoked in the classroom. All the teenagers would try to be trendy and smoke. Not today. You should know better. You should know that it's not good to start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Nickel Belt for her reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank my colleagues for having listened for an hour—you deserve a medal—and for your comments as well.

The bill, Bill 131, is out to do good things. It's out to ban flavour and to make sure that we expand the areas of our province where we cannot smoke—and where tobacco is sold. It's all good. It took a long time to get to second reading, but it is here now. I would encourage all of my colleagues to try to move this quickly.

If that doesn't work, we have the backup of Bill 149, which is my bill, which tends to do the same thing except that my bill also bans new tobacco products.

The member from Etobicoke North mentioned the ecigarettes that are becoming more and more popular in Ontario. This is but one new product that I don't want coming into our province. We don't need them. We have other measures to help people quit, and this is not one of them.

#### 1500

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked to us about his loss, his father and two sisters. I'm sure similar stories could be shared by other members of this House. When 90% of people who die of lung cancer were smokers, when 80% of the people with COPD are smokers, we know that it puts a huge strain on our health care system, not to mention the family, and that's what he shared with us.

Thank you also to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and various regulations. The short title of this bill is Youth Smoking Prevention Act, 2014, which is targeted to address youth smoking measures but also looks to restrict smoking from additional public locations and the sale of tobacco products on post-secondary education premises and specified provincial government properties.

Like the member from Nickel Belt, I'm speaking in favour of this bill. There are other members of my caucus who will also be speaking in favour and have already spoken in favour, as the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound did. This is a revision to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care first introduced Bill 131 last November, and second reading for this proposed legislation and revision to certain regulations occurred just before I was sworn into my new position as the member of provincial Parliament for Thornhill. However, this government seems to be in love with feel-good bills in what I think is an attempt to distract the public from reducing government spending and paying for something that the government never uses, like the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga, the money wasted to unsuccessfully implement an electronic medical record system-I'll remind those who are in the Legislature that I was able to introduce electronic medical records in my medical practice—as well as OPP investigations of wrongdoing on helicopter purchases, as well as-

### Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to caution the member that it's important that the remarks she makes in the context of this debate are relevant to the debate and not bringing up other issues that are irrelevant to the debate.

I'll return to the member for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: This government continues to try to play the role of what I consider to be a parent, and this is another example of it. Even though I, myself, am not a smoker—and to tell you the truth, I find it hard to be around people who smoke, even if they're not smoking at that time; just the smell of it bothers me. But right now, smoking is legal. I know the member from Nickel Belt did raise an interesting point. She said that she would like

to have smoking completely banned in the province. I think when we have a public health care system, that's something to consider because we're all paying for the

I know there's talk of banning things like tanning beds. We have to realize there's a lot of cost to society, to the health care system. Things like alcohol and alcoholism—not just the medical costs, but the social costs are exorbitant.

It's disturbing for a lot of people, though, in Ontario. Those of us who are adults want to choose how we live our lives, and it does make some people uncomfortable when they feel that the government is sort of a big brother or big sister bossing them around. What we do here is that balance between making laws to have fair business practices, making laws so that our health care system can function, making laws for the safety of all of us in society—not just the children but the adults as well. seat belt laws and things like that.

It is sad to realize that sometimes we lose the right to live our lives exactly how we want, and it's that balance we're always struggling with. You hear from everybody when they're speaking that they're struggling.

In continuing this sort of nanny state philosophy—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Huge nanny state.

Mrs. Gila Martow: It is a nanny state. Sometimes it's necessary to have a nanny state, I admit it.

This Liberal government initially supported a private member's bill to ban flavoured tobacco products geared towards minors, and it has crafted a government bill to ban the sale of these products. We see a government in place that loves to tell Ontarians what they should or should not be doing with their lives. I think that we have to consider that people do want to live their lives the way they want, and we have to consider what else is going on in the world.

I've been to countries like Spain where—it's shocking—you come up to the customs booth, and the customs official, who is a government employee working at the customs booth, is smoking. Obviously, you can't tell the customs official to stop smoking, because you don't want to have a problem getting into the country. So you're stuck standing there at the booth. Just picture that: You're coming in at Pearson with the mobs of people and you're going up to the customs official, and the person is literally holding your passport and blowing smoke in your face. It's shocking, but we do have to consider in the grand scheme of things that we want to welcome tourists to Ontario. If we ban smoking on outside patios—not just inside restaurants—and in parks, in the playgrounds and things like that, there can be repercussions on tourism. So we have to take that into consideration when we craft new bills.

As I mentioned, I've never smoked, nor did any member of my immediate family. We used to joke when I was kid because my mother, who was a CA and a college professor, couldn't even light a match, so she couldn't light our birthday candles. If we kids were home, we had to either be old enough to light them or wait for some adult to come by.

Unfortunately, my mother actually died of lung cancer-somebody who could never light a match, never lived with anybody who smoked, never really worked in a workplace with people who smoked. But we are seeing a rise of lung cancers in people who don't smoke, so we can't just look at statistics and assume that every case of lung cancer is due to second-hand smoke.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Maybe that's because they're breathing in the second-hand smoke that you want to defend.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have to say, she really was not exposed to second-hand smoke.

We have to also address, in terms of pollution and damage to the lungs, what gridlock is doing. I'm sorry if I'm going off topic, but gridlock creates incredible pollution, and it's not just time wasted, but it is a terrible health care concern.

The perception of smoking has definitely changed for all of us since we were kids. It was an established norm that people would light up at work, in restaurants, in hospitals, as the member from Nickel Belt mentioned, even in doctors' offices—doctors were smoking in front of their patients-and, of course, on airplanes. We all know that a lot of movies glorified smoking, as did TV shows.

I remember standing in line at the bank to make a deposit of my babysitting money. I was only about 12 years old. There was somebody smoking in front of me and somebody smoking behind me. Up until then, if I ever had that situation, I could turn my back on whoever smoked, but I felt trapped. I really remember that feeling of standing in line and saying to myself, just a 12-yearold kid, "There's something wrong here. There's something wrong with the adults." I think that that was one of the moments—we all have moments when we're a kid or a teenager where we realize that adults aren't this perfect group of people, that they have their flaws and they don't always do what's right, and it's time for us to start thinking for ourselves about what's right or wrong and not to blindly follow what an adult tells us to do. Maybe that's why I'm here today. Maybe that's why a lot of us are here in the Legislature.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Please don't tell my daughters. Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, don't tell your daughters; I won't.

I'm from Montreal, so certainly, when I picture René Lévesque—he was the Quebec Premier—I picture a cloud of smoke around him. Even in some of the pictures that we see on the walls of Queen's Park, of the early leaders of our great country, you see that hazy cloud of smoke. Smoking was legal then, and smoking is still legal now.

I think that there is a movement afoot, and we do have to maybe be an example—Canada, in certain regards—be a leader for the rest of the world. Maybe we have to welcome tourists to come to Canada to have a real healthy lifestyle and welcome them to visit our hospitals and see how our health care is functioning and join us in living those healthier lives.

It would be nice if I could say that in my grand-children's time smoking will not be a social norm at all. My own kids, when they saw somebody smoking, used to sometimes almost embarrass me and say, "Look at that person. That's just terrible." They're really learning it, and our school system is doing a good job teaching the kids not just to say no to drugs, but to say no to smoking in general.

1510

Previously, we gave municipalities the power to determine where people could or could not light up a cigarette. We all know that Toronto was a leader in this regard. Their board of health championed the cause for nonsmokers and started banning smoking in bars and restaurants.

As an optometrist, I can't tell you how many times I had patients who said they needed glasses because they couldn't wear contact lenses in bars and things like that. That was a problem, because they were often young people wearing contact lenses. It was a sort of look that they wanted for evenings and weekends, and just when they wanted to wear their contact lenses—which was to a bar or a club—was exactly when they couldn't wear their contact lenses. It has certainly improved the life of many contact lens wearers. Sometimes we forget about all the aspects of smoking, and we just think about the inhalation in lungs, but it does affect people's eyes and ears and things like that.

Throughout the province, we have seen municipalities that followed Toronto's lead and did limit smoking to different degrees, mainly in food establishments and, of course, bars.

I am a little concerned. I do feel bad when I think about how many restaurants and even bars created, at a huge expense, non-smoking areas. We do have to recognize that. Businesses aren't just sort of an entity; corporations and businesses are people. People invest their savings to comply with the laws and what they're told the future landscape and climate is going to be for business. They invest in these separate smoking rooms with very expensive filters. Maybe they ensure that the staff are comfortable with it, but then the staff are kind of stuck because they want the job badly. So while I do prefer not to see any smoking, obviously in restaurants and bars-I haven't even been able to go on patios because, invariably, there's always a smoker there. It does ruin your meal. I've never really understood why somebody would want to smoke while they're eating.

In 2005, the province decreed it knew best, and it banned these separate smoking rooms. We saw a lot more patios going up, even ones with heaters for the winter and those plastic sort of windows. You've got to be pretty desperate to have that cigarette to go out in the cold, but we do see people outside hospitals even. It's shocking when you see somebody with that IV—can you picture them in their hospital gown and they're standing with the IV pole smoking a cigarette? You can barely look at them because it's so uncomfortable to look at them outside the hospitals. So now we have the govern-

ment's revised smoking restrictions, which I think has all-party support, from what I as a rookie member of the Legislature can surmise.

My colleague for Huron-Bruce's role is the caucus critic for small business and red tape. I want to note that she has some concerns that this will negatively impact cafes, bars and restaurants. I think that we do have to remember that we are trying to bring tourists to Canada, and to maybe warn tourists somehow that they will not be able to smoke in too many places because most hotels don't allow smoking. There are smoking rooms, but you don't always get a smoking room. I think that maybe we'll have to address that once this legislation passes, if it does, in the near future.

I remember sitting in a folding chair outside a soccer game, little kids in grade 1 running around playing soccer. I had a baby on my lap, and one of the adults sitting next to me lit up a cigarette. You can't really say anything, but you just look over at them, and you give them that sort of look that you hope is telling. They don't take the hint, or they choose to ignore it, and a bunch of us had to sort of move our chairs over to another side of the field with all the stuff. I think that's part of the problem, the lack of courtesy in general. As we see, again, on another topic-cellphones and things like that-we all need to show more courtesy to each other in terms of what we're doing and how it affects our neighbours: the home next door, but also somebody on a park bench near you, somebody on a sidewalk near you or even somebody in a restaurant near you, if we could all think about that a little bit more. I think that's been part of the problem for us non-smokers: We've felt a genuine lack of courtesy from smokers. If there were a place that they could go and not bother anybody and they would go off and smoke there, they didn't seem to take advantage of that.

It appears that we're in a race with the other provinces to raise the fines, and the result will be the highest fines in Canada for selling tobacco to youth. I think most of us have no problem with that. The present fines, I think, would be doubled, based on what the suggestions are right now. I can't imagine somebody wanting to sell tobacco to a minor, to tell you the truth.

I also want to comment on the fact that part of this proposal is to ban tobacco on post-secondary education campuses and specified provincial government properties. These are adults, the students. To tell you the truth, if somebody was looking to open a business, probably opening one right outside a university selling tobacco would be a wise business decision. I understand that they're trying not to speak out of both sides of their mouth. You can't say, "We're trying to discourage youth from smoking" and then sell it to the same youth, but I don't know how realistic that is, to tell you the truth. But I would like to see smoking banned from any school setting. I think it's taxpayer-supported, and if we want to just ban the actual smoking on campuses, that's something we have to consider. I walk a lot in my area by a high school. We all know that several years back they banned smoking on school grounds from the high schools, so the kids all huddle on the sidewalk. I guess they think it's very cool. Well, they just look very cool to me in the winter because they are all out there without their coats and they are standing, huddling in these big groups smoking. When you walk by—and again, maybe it's that courtesy thing; maybe there's something in tobacco that gives people the right to feel that only they matter—they don't move off the sidewalk; they don't let you pass. You have to walk around them on the grass or the road, and they're completely blocking the sidewalk. So I can understand we ban it on school grounds, but then they just move on to the sidewalks. To tell you the truth, I'd rather they were on the school grounds and not blocking the sidewalks.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 131 won't please everyone; we know that. Smokers are definitely going to complain and say that it's an attack on their personal freedom. Bars and restaurants see it as an attack on their livelihood. But it is a society that wants to be health-conscious, and we have health costs to consider. These measures are a good step towards helping to prevent our youth from lighting up in Ontario. I will absolutely be supporting this, as will my caucus.

I just wanted to mention that the youth who are having Freeze the Industry target us—maybe they have to target the other youth. We know youth are very good at that. When McGuinty was Premier, he had advocated that for youth driving cars, for the first few years they wouldn't be able to have more than one passenger. We saw the youth rally on Facebook and social media against that. They're very good at raising awareness for their causes when they need to, on social media. Maybe they should be having a youth-on-youth campaign against smoking because, to me, that would be far more successful than adults telling youth not to light up.

As far as the hookah, which was brought up by the member from Nickel Belt, that's a concern to me, because I think anybody who is saying that that is perfectly harmless is kidding themselves. Just because something is herbal—if you're in the medical profession you understand that just because it says "herbal"—guess what?—most of the medications that doctors prescribe are, in theory, herbal at some point.

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I think that we have to encourage people to quit smoking. A friend of mine that I spoke to about Bill 131 this weekend mentioned to me up in Thornhill, just this weekend, that he actually quit smoking when they started to make it more difficult and there were so many places he couldn't smoke and he started to feel that it was not favourable in most people's eyes. He said that that was the difference. I think that's what it often is with people.

I'd like to do everything we can to help the member from York South–Weston to quit and to keep her health in as good shape as she can for as long as she can. We all have to help our neighbours and our friends and our family members. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and make some comments on the member from Thornhill on Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act.

I'd also like to refer back to the member from Nickel Belt, because she has been an advocate on this issue for a lot of years. I think something we always have to keep in our mind is that 36 people a day die from smoking-related disease in this province. There's a huge financial cost to that, but the bigger cost is the personal cost, because those 36 people every day all have families. There's a huge, huge personal cost.

To us, this bill is a natural progression. One thing the member from Thornhill—I really appreciate that she brought a lot of personal perspective to this issue about how things were. She remembered, and I remember, when you walked into every restaurant and it was full of smoke. We've slowly been improving that.

The member from Nickel Belt mentioned that we could have been moving on this quicker, but at least we're moving slowly ahead. I think this is a natural progression on how we're making life better.

The member from Thornhill mentioned the nanny state a couple of times. I think that in this case, this isn't a nanny state. This isn't a nanny-state bill, and I think she would agree. This is a bill about the health, the long-term health, of our society.

One thing that we face where I live, in my riding—we're right on the Quebec border. We make the rules very strict, and we're making them stricter, to access cigarettes in Ontario. Somehow we're going to have to figure out how to combat—our young people drive five minutes. The member from Nickel Belt was talking about the smoke shacks. That's the biggest business across the border, and we're going to have to look into how to combat that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 131. Our government is strongly committed to protecting the health of every Ontarian, especially the children. So I take great exception when the member from Thornhill talks about this bill as a nanny state. As someone who has dedicated my life as a public health person, I could tell you that for over 25 years, this is the number one issue when it comes to the health of young people and the future of this province.

I also want to acknowledge in my comments my colleague from Oak Ridges-Markham. I worked with her to make sure York region had a no-smoking bylaw.

When the member opposite talks about the concern about small business, I totally get it. But the health of our children, the health of Ontarians, must be the primary goal of this Legislature.

The other piece is that the Minister of Health is showing leadership and is courageous in bringing Bill 131, because at the end of the day, our municipal colleagues are already banning smoking in playgrounds, in schools, in soccer fields. For the member to say that prohibiting selling cigarettes in universities and colleges may be a challenge—no, no, no. It has already happened to hospitals. Could you imagine that you're selling cigarettes in a facility that's providing care?

We must stand and provide leadership. That's what leadership is about. We must send a message to the public that at the end of the day, this Legislature must protect every child's and every young person's health. Through the proposed Bill 131, if passed, that would do the right thing.

At the end of the day, our goal as a government is to lower the tobacco rates across Canada, to become the first province to have a single-digit tobacco rate, in terms of cessation, but, more importantly, to protect the health of every young person in this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I support the presentation we've just heard from the member from Thornhill. It's truly a breath of fresh air during this debate. We know this bill would prohibit smoking on playgrounds and sports fields, and the member made mention of younger people, high school students, out on the sidewalk smoking tobacco. I've got news for people in this House: They're not smoking flavoured tobacco, they're smoking illegal tobacco; they're smoking contraband, straight tobacco. Much of it is swept off the floor of many, many manufacturing operations in native communities. I'm very disappointed that this government is turning a blind eye to that.

We know that this bill will ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products targeted at kids. That's fine, but according to Health Canada, 94% of the market for flavoured cigar products, for example, is legal-age-driven. The majority of the people are over the age of 25.

I would suggest this government consider banning the sale of tobacco by organized crime to young people. That's the primary market. Young people are pricesensitive. Why pay \$80 for a carton when you can pay \$8? You can get rollies. They're in a plastic bag, 200, 220 cigarettes. You take 20 out, put them in a plastic container, keep it in your jacket, keep it in your purse.

So the bill will prohibit tobacco sales on postsecondary-education campuses. I suggest you prohibit the sale of tobacco—flavoured tobacco is not the issue here; it's illegal tobacco, and it's disgusting what this government has allowed to happen over the last 11 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I rise again to speak to this bill, and I do so knowing that I'm one of the more senior members of the House. I'm 66 years old. I remember, as a young man, flying back and forth across Canada when there was still smoking on airplanes, be it Air Canada or Trans-Canada Airlines. They'd be blowing smoke up at you. They'd put you in the back and still blow the smoke up on you. So we've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

Just a quick aside: When my son was born 36 years ago and I brought him home, my mother-in-law and her mother were there, and they said, "What are you going to call us?" I said, "Well, we'll call old Grandma 'Great-Grandma' and we'll call you 'Not-So-Great-Grandma." That didn't win me any points, but at the time, my mother-in-law smoked, my father-in-law smoked and my parents smoked. When we had the kids, we said, "No smoking in our home, and we're not bringing the kids to your home if you continue to smoke." Right away, four people close to us quit smoking. So that's a good thing.

The member from Thornhill talked about what youth can do, especially with today's technology of banding together and putting out messages saying no to smoking. I think that's a good thing, because we do listen to our

young people.

On the other issue of the legality of tobacco, I'm of the understanding that there are 10,000 convenience stores in Ontario and, on average, 40% of their revenue is derived from the legal sale of tobacco products. So when we talk about contraband tobacco, I know the people who sell it legally really want harsher measures for those who sell it illegally. The contraband tobacco is worse for you, as tough it as sounds, than tobacco, which is really bad for you anyway.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I can return now to the member for Thornhill, if she wishes to

reply.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank all the comments. I won't list all the ridings, because that will use up my two minutes and I probably don't know some of them.

I want to comment on the sale of contraband, because I think that the illegal tobacco, from what I understand, lacks proper filters, and it is more dangerous for those who are smoking it. I have heard that it is purchased often in bags; people buy it by the bag.

I believe it is a hazard for public safety because what happens with the money that it is generating? I believe it is often used to buy weapons that are then brought into Canada illegally, and it should be of concern to all of us.

I think that, probably, it is more important than just banning the sale of flavoured cigarettes to ban the sale of contraband to anybody. If it's being sold on a reservation or something like that, if you don't live on the reservation, why should you be allowed to go onto a reservation to buy tobacco products?

The other part of contraband is that we're not generating any taxes. As sad as it is to admit, we do generate a lot of taxes for the province which do help pay some of our health care costs. As sad as it is to admit, with the sale of contraband cigarettes, we're losing all that tax revenue. We should be focused on anything that is costing us tax revenue—all aspects of the underground economy. Now, with electronic banking and the portable machines, there is no reason for us to allow the underground economy to keep expanding at the rate it has.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a delight for me to stand here and speak in favour of this bill. I have spent my entire political lifetime—some 26 years, and even before that trying to do things to stop people from smoking. I have never really smoked myself. I only ever smoked one cigarette one night. I still remember the foulness of the taste. I still remember how my mouth tasted the next morning, and I vowed I would never do that again. I never have, but I have spent a lifetime trying to convince people that this is bad for your health and that we need to find ways to wean people off of tobacco, and, I think far more importantly, make sure that young people understand the dangers.

I heard a little bit of the member from Nickel Belt's speech. She truly has been a champion in this Legislature. She really, truly was a champion with the introduction of her own bill, Bill 130, which, just by a day or so, predated the government's Bill 131, which we're going to be talking about today. I think that her bill was better, but this bill certainly does go a long way to doing what she wanted to do.

The member from Nickel Belt's bill was better in one primary circumstance: in that it would ban all new tobacco products. It's important to understand how smart the merchandisers, the lawyers, the advocates and the shareholders of large tobacco companies are. They are able to instantly change their marketing and come up with new products. They can do so literally at will and at whim. They are able to come up with a new product, new advertising, new packaging, new sizes—whatever is necessary to make sure that they are not subject to the laws that are passed in this Legislature. If we truly want to put an end to new types of tobacco sales, then we should be willing to adopt something similar to what the member from Nickel Belt had in her Bill 130.

If I can show by example, in the year 2008, there was a bill before this Legislature co-sponsored by the member from Nickel Belt and by the member who is now our Speaker, Speaker Levac. The two of them had a cosponsored bill in 2008 which would ban the sale of single tobacco products, particularly single tobacco products that were flavoured. It didn't take very long after the passage of that bill that Big Tobacco immediately found some loopholes. As I said, what they did was they changed the packaging, they changed the sizes of the cigarettes, adding a couple of grams to each one of the flavoured tobacco cigarettes, and found that they were then in compliance with the law and not contrary to what the will of this House was, I think unanimously: to stop that kind of flavoured tobacco from being sold. It only took a couple of weeks.

We in the New Democratic Party, and particularly the member from Nickel Belt, feverishly tried to work through other private members' bills to close the loopholes, and have continued to try to do that since 2008, to absolutely no avail. What we are doing and what we are going to talk about here today is trying to close further and tighten those loopholes. Why I am speaking today at all is because I think we need to have this full discussion

in the House about how to close that off once and for all. because it's not going to be sufficient if we pass this bill and find out that the tobacco companies and their lawyers and their marketers are able to go around the bill again. That is not the will of the people of this province, what they want, and it's certainly not what we should be debating.

Back to the bill. I am somewhat disappointed, and perhaps someone in the government, in their two-minute hit, can tell me why it has taken so long to lift this bill from the order paper. This bill was introduced in this House at first reading on the 18th of November last year. Nearly five months, it has taken, from the bill being introduced in this House, to have it brought forward for second reading and to have the leadoff speeches which finished today. In those five months, many people have died as a result of tobacco-related illnesses, but even more important to what we are trying do is, hundreds, if not thousands, of young people have taken up the habit a habit which we might have been able to do something about had we taken action back last November.

We ought not to spend a lot of time on this bill, but I am delighted to speak about it and I hope there is some full debate here. Because it's not just to pass the bill; it's to make sure that we have looked at it very carefully to close any potential loopholes before it actually becomes the law. We need to take the time to think about tobacco sales in general in this country. Tobacco sales are declining in most countries worldwide. However, there are some countries where tobacco sales continue to climb. I don't know whether any of you have had the privilege or the opportunity to go to the Far East, particularly China. I don't think I ever saw so many people smoking as I saw there. The tobacco products were extremely cheap, and people were encouraged—and are encouraged at a young age—to take up the habit, and you will literally see thousands upon thousands of people in the streets smoking at any given time.

We need, in this country, to go away from that. We especially need to go away from it in the schoolyards. One of the most disheartening things I ever see in my public life is to go into a high school, and sometimes even a public school ground, and see a young person smoking. I don't understand why they want to do it in the first place, except probably to look cool or tough or something, which the cigarette dangling from their mouth obviously connotes to them. But that is not what we need to do. I would agree with some of the other speakersmy colleague from Thornhill and my colleague from—

Mr. Barrett, what's your riding?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Michael Prue: Haldimand-Norfolk-who talked about illegal cigarettes. Those studies that have been done, particularly in schoolyards and around hospitals, show that 20% or more of the cigarettes being consumed by young people is illegal tobacco that is bought in a smoke shack, or usually out of the back of somebody's car in close proximity to the schoolyard.

We know that young people are taking those cigarettes because they are enormously cheap, and they are able to purchase them without all of the safeguards, under the age of 18, which they have to do in any one of the convenience stores in the province. They are smoking those cigarettes, they are trading those cigarettes, and they are becoming addicted to those cigarettes.

There is one thing this government needs to do in conjunction with this bill, and they need to be done together. This bill is one half; the other half is to close down the illegal tobacco trade. If tobacco is to continue to be a legitimate product, sold in a store under licence, we need to make sure that it is not being sold on the streets as an illegitimate product which is going to harm people enormously. We need to do that.

If I can be very crass for a moment, this Legislature, some two years ago, gave the finance minister the authority to do all things by regulation in order to shut down the illegal tobacco trade and, in the process of so doing, bring up to \$1 billion to the coffers of this province, because if the cigarettes to be sold are sold legally, then tax revenues flow from those.

The finance minister has yet to deliver on the authority that we gave to him. Nothing, literally nothing, has happened with the authority granted in the budget bill two years ago. As a result, Ontario continues to suffer, and people continue to die.

In the 20 minutes that I'm going to be using, making this speech, there will be at least one or possibly two deaths, in all of Canada, happening as a result of the consumption of tobacco. So people need to think very clearly and carefully about what they're doing.

This bill, as I said, is a good bill. This bill needs to be supported. But it needs to be talked through—and I want to say this again and again—to make sure that when we're finished, there are no loopholes left. In the last couple of bills we've tried on this, there were enormous loopholes. Those loopholes have allowed what we don't want to happen to continue happening.

This is not a bill that needs to be rushed, or should be rushed, to that extent. Certainly, if the government can take five months from the time of introducing this bill to calling it for second reading debate, then they can take a little bit of time in committee to make sure that they've got it right.

What this bill does do is—and what I'm very happy to support the bill for—first of all, it prohibits promotional items being sold along with the tobacco. As a non-smoker, I'm not sure what those are, but I know that in the past, promotional items were often given out with tobacco sales. People who bought tobacco could get something else as a reward. This will make sure that this does not happen.

It prohibits flavoured tobacco. I would think that flavoured tobacco has a niche market, but it is also a market to someone who is new to smoking. They might like the chocolate- or candy-flavoured or candy-flavoured or fruit-flavoured tobacco in lieu of or instead of the tobacco, which has its ordinary foul, pungent aroma—certainly, the taste I will never forget.

It gives the authority for officials to enter into premises which hitherto they were not allowed to go into and to check for illegal tobacco sales. It gives those officials the authority to seize, the authority to confiscate, and we need to have that.

We need to have that not only in terms of legal tobacco sales but also in terms of illegal tobacco sales. Those are primary, in my mind, that need to be curbed, because if we do not curb those sales, what we are doing on the other side with the flavoured tobacco products, and what this bill intends to do, may all be for naught. If this government is going to continue to allow illegal tobacco sales to increase, then we know what is going to happen.

I do know that in the province of Quebec, in their last budget, they increased taxation on legal tobacco, thinking it was going to raise some revenue and cut some people out of smoking tobacco. First of all, it didn't cut out anybody smoking tobacco. Tobacco consumption actually went up, and the revenues actually went down because all that happened as a result of that was that people went out and bought the illegal product. We cannot fall into that trap here in Ontario. We need to take concerted action immediately against illegal tobacco, and then take equally strong action on flavoured tobacco products and where people are allowed to smoke.

This bill is also good in terms of it doubles the fines or allows the fines to be doubled for people who break the law. The fines remain ridiculously small and there is a real incentive to break the law, knowing that your first fine is so small. This is going to double it, which is going to have some retailers think twice about what they're doing.

This bill also does something around the issue of hookahs. I thought those were part of my youth, seeing those in and around restaurants and bars. You used to see them even in terms of people's homes—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Shishas.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. Now they call them shishas. Same thing; it's still a hookah. They're just sort of like there, and people don't even realize that smoking herbal products or tobacco in them, or anything, is just as harmful as if you were inhaling it straight from the cigarette. We need to get a handle all on of that. Quite frankly, those days should be gone as well.

I'm also heartened by what the regulations purportedly will allow to happen as well. They will prohibit cigarette smoking on playgrounds, in sports facilities and other places where people congregate. This is vitally important. I know that there was a time—and I still occasionally see it—of people smoking in close proximity to where children are playing. I know that people smoke very often in close proximity to where dozens or hundreds or thousands of people gather to watch sporting events. We need to make sure that those people who are going out for a recreational afternoon are protected from second-hand smoke.

I am heartened as well that the regulations will also stop cigarette smoking on patios, whether they're covered or uncovered. I know that for the longest time, following the passage of bills both in the city of Toronto and East York before that, and latterly from the province of Ontario, you could smoke outside on a patio, but not if there was an awning above your head. This clearly shows that there's going to be no differentiation made. Whether there's an awning or not, patios will be verboten.

I think this is a good thing in terms of the restaurateurs, who are apprehensive about this, and in terms of their patrons in the restaurant who are looking forward to going out and enjoying the open air without having their lungs polluted by someone sitting next to them. I'd like to hearken back to my days as a municipal councillor and mayor. The restaurateurs were the ones who most fiercely fought the implementation of no smoking in restaurants. My goodness, they talked about how much business they were going to lose.

I remember the late and great Dr. Sheela Basrur, who was the medical officer of health, first of all in East York and then, after that, for the amalgamated megacity of Toronto. I remember having the honour of proposing her being hired not only in East York but also in Toronto as well, moving those motions. She was a very brilliant woman, and she fought that attitude from some of the restaurant industry by proving statistically that in California and in New York, where the same laws had been passed against smoking inside of restaurants, the business actually went up and not down, because people who would not frequent the restaurants due to what they perceived to be the ill health as a result of the smoke in the rooms actually went more often to the restaurants. Although the restaurateurs did not believe her, within a couple of years, it was very, very clear that there was a boom in the restaurants and that the smoking ban actually helped the bottom line of those restaurateurs who were so afraid.

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These regulations will also prohibit the sales on campuses, schools and day nurseries. It will prohibit smoking on all provincial property. I'm not sure whether that will include places like our provincial parks. I don't know; that might be a bit of a stretch. But I do know it will prohibit smoking in some of the government buildings here around Queen's Park. It would also prohibit smoking outside on outdoor hospital grounds.

In the final analysis, this is a very good bill. This bill could be made stronger if we were to adopt the provisions of the member from Nickel Belt and ban all new tobacco products, because that would stop those who are ingenious in finding ways around the law of having to comply. It would also make the bill much stronger if the government were to do the right thing and end illegal tobacco sales in the province.

But, in the final analysis, this is a bill on which we must proceed. I am looking forward to hearing other debate, but most especially I am wanting to make sure that when this goes to committee for clause-by-clause, that we shut down all of the loopholes to make sure no one else becomes addicted in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks by the member from Beaches-East York. As he, I think, was saying at the end of his comments, we know that one of the most vulnerable times for people to become addicted is when they're young. So many people who are addicted to tobacco later in life started when they were teenagers. We believe that it's particularly important to intervene in tobacco use and stop tobacco use at a young age.

The Youth Smoking Prevention Act would, if passed, double the fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, which would make the penalties in Ontario the highest in Canada. It would prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products to help prevent kids from starting to smoke and

becoming regular smokers.

I was absolutely astounded when the Minister of Health brought some of these flavoured tobacco products in one day for us to have a look at. They're so clearly marketed to children, but the nicotine is there to get them

We also want to strengthen the enforcement authority to test for the use of tobacco in water pipes in places where smoking is prohibited, and clarify that it's prohibited to offer promotional items with the sale of tobacco.

There are a number of regulatory changes that would prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, restaurant and bar patios; no tobacco sales in post-secondary campuses; and restrict smoking on outdoor grounds of hospitals and other government properties.

But what I did want to say was, yes, this bill has been not quick in getting debated, but that's because so many other bills are getting filibustered. If we could stop the filibustering of a whole lot of bills, we would get around to important bills like this one much more quickly. Then we could get it off to committee to get the amendments discussed that the member wants to have discussed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; a pleasure. I'll just remind the government that they call the bills to debate. So it's one of those things. You can quite easily fix that whole roster any time you wish.

I rise today as a dad, a brother, an uncle, a cousin, a father of youth who need us to make sure that we're paying attention and doing the right things for their benefit down the road. I rise today also as the critic for youth and children.

I'm not normally someone who supports—someone in the debate today has talked about the nanny state, and typically I'm not in favour of that. But in this case, because it's children—youth who do not have the ability to protect themselves because they don't know all the dangers and the ramifications-I believe it is incumbent upon to us to step up and put those things in place to ensure that their health is the first and foremost priority.

I shared earlier that I've gone through, unfortunately, seeing my sister die from lung cancer. I have another sister who has breast cancer. My mom was a survivor of cancer. Almost everyone in my family except my oldest sister and I have been smokers. My dad was a smoker and died from emphysema. It's a horrible thing to watch. Other than making youth watch that video and see what I actually had to do beside my sister's bedside as she passed away, I'm not certain what else we can do but put something like this in that is so stringent, so powerful to people, to stop them from doing it. We need to protect our youth.

There is so much waste of the money that we spend on cancer care, trying to prevent—well we should prevent more—trying to cure and trying to treat people that have gone through this horrible disease, something that just makes absolutely no sense to me. I always say to my two boys, "Every time you even think about buying a package of cigarettes"—at whatever that horrible cost is nowadays—"think of all the wonderful things you could do for the less fortunate. Think of what you could do for a child in Africa who has not got food today, that you could send that money there. Think of the things you could do in your own backyard, with our First Nations communities—that we put money there."

I will be supporting this legislation. We need to do what we can to protect our youth. Do not smoke, you young pages in front of me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I certainly want to echo my support of this bill. I think it's absolutely something we need to do. I want to briefly talk about why it's important and why we need to go a little bit further in a different direction as well.

It's absolutely important for us to provide guidance so that our youth can make the right decisions. I think we all support that notion. I think that's a very important notion. I think we all have come to some consensus on that. So what we can do to assist young people in making the right decisions by discouraging them from making the wrong decisions is a good thing do. I certainly support the bill and I support that component of the initiative.

However, I want to take it a step further. The member from the Conservative Party who just spoke touched on this...

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, sir. I know that my colleague from Beaches–East York also talked about this. In addition to education, in general, there are rising costs for health care. Costs are increasing every year, year by year. What we need to do is put more effort into prevention. We know that the end stages of any disease—whether it's cancer, whether it's diabetes—are devastating to the families, to the loved ones and to the individual, and they have a great cost to society.

If we put more emphasis on prevention—prevention in some of the most basic ways: nutrition, opportunities to exercise, opportunities to be physically fit. Sometime it's not only the will but also the space. Physically, there aren't places for people to play, to engage in activities. There aren't opportunities for people to afford to go to a

gym, to have a gym membership. There need to be ways that we can, as a society, encourage healthy decisions—to make healthy decisions the easier decision. If you're given two options, and one option is more affordable, it's cheaper, it's easier, and it's more unhealthy, you'll do it because it's easier. But if you're given another option that's healthy, and it's harder to do, you won't do it. We need to reverse that. Make the healthy decisions easier, and we can have a healthier society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act. Our government is strongly committed to healthy lives for all Ontarians. As part of that, we have set ambitious goals of having the lowest smoking rate in Canada. That's why we introduced Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, and new regulations and amendments. We know that prevention is the best way to tackle this very tough issue.

I'm also really pleased at the broad support that we have been receiving on this bill. "The Ontario Lung Association welcomes the measures to strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. The government is addressing major gaps in regulations to protect young people, and all Ontarians, from becoming addicted to tobacco, the number one cause of preventable illness and death in our province."

Yesterday, I was so pleased to attend a local event in Scarborough. It was put on by Ms. Letna, who is a cancer survivor. The event was in support of the Rouge Valley Health System, the hospital located in my riding.

Dr. Mohan presented an update at this forum to the 400 people in attendance. He gave us key things that we could do to prevent diseases like cancer from occurring in the first place. The number one thing that we can do is to stop or avoid smoking altogether. It is something that is affecting the health of all Ontarians, and it's something that we can do proactively to put in this regulation so that those who are the youngest members of our community don't start smoking in the first place.

Yes, there are other things that we can do in terms of building a healthy lifestyle, such as exercise, eating right, and reducing obesity, but we also know that avoiding and preventing smoking is one of the number one ways that we can build a healthy community in Ontario, so I support Bill 131.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you to those of my colleagues who had something to say about my speech: the Minister of Education, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, and the member from Scarborough-Guildwood.

To the minister: I agree. I think she was listening to my speech. She talked about many of the same things that I had talked about, but then she ended on what I thought was a rather bizarre note, talking about a filibuster. I hope she wasn't aiming that at me, because I don't remember anybody, either myself or anybody in my caucus, filibustering a single bill in the last two years. I don't remember that. So since she was responding to me, Mr. Speaker, I really, really do wonder where that opinion came from, and how well-founded it is.

To the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: Yes, it is very difficult. I, too, watched an uncle die from lung cancer. He was a cop—a big man, a strong man—who smoked two packs of cigarettes a day, many of them inside the police car, so all that smoke was trapped. To see what happened to him in his lifetime and at the end of his life was pretty sad; a big, huge, strong man being reduced in the final ravages of that disease.

To the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton: He is absolutely right. Prevention is the number one thing we can do in order to save money in the long term. If we can prevent people from smoking, we won't have to pay the huge inflated hospital and other costs at the end of life when people finally succumb to what has happened.

To the member from Scarborough–Guildwood: I have only got five seconds. Thank you for what you had to say. I hope to hear your speech as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: It is my pleasure to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which would amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and various other regulations.

There are many influencers to encourage youth to smoke: peers, the media or actors. I was just speaking to a young page and we were coming up with a few actors and actresses who happen to smoke. We casually mentioned Justin Bieber, but I didn't think he smoked—at least not cigarettes, that is. I love Justin Bieber, by the way, so don't get me wrong on that. In music videos and television shows and movies we all see actors smoking in the videos; however, as a parent, we all have a great amount of influence on our children. Not only that, it's our responsibility to teach them about the ill effects of smoking.

I have three young boys at home—I know some of them will be watching today. Murphy is always tuned to the TV, and Lincoln is just probably in his swing going back and forth; he's not able to speak yet, but I feel it's so important to teach them the dangers of cigarettes and hope that they make the healthy decision to not smoke as they grow older.

I can tell you that I've never been a smoker, and, in fact, I've not bought a pack of cigarettes. I know the opposition or the government probably has a file, and they'll see in there that, in fact, I have not bought a pack of cigarettes.

You know what? I just have no interest at all in that. It just disgusts me, actually. I would encourage all parents to really open up that conversation with their children and keep that communication going as they grow up into teenagers and young adults. Especially during this past

winter, I happened to see folks smoking outside. I just said, "Look at this guy out here, freezing his rear end off for a cigarette." I just don't get it. Clearly, there's another side effect of smoking, living in Canada: You freeze your rear end off doing it.

Look: Statistics show that children are more likely to smoke if their parents do, which is why parents must take it upon themselves to quit smoking and teach their children of the effects on their health and on the health of those around them. Fortunately, over the years, the majority of kids and teens who smoke has declined, and that's a good thing. In fact, according to a youth smoking survey in Canada, 2% of youth in grades 5 to 9, and 11% of those in grades 10 to 12, reported that they were current smokers. Stats also show that most children have not tried cigarettes at all, not even a puff, and that's a good thing. In grades 5 to 9, 82% of youth have never tried it. By grades 10 to 12, 52% of youth reported that they still hadn't tried it at all. So I think those stats are moving in the right direction, but those stats also show us that 55% have tried some form of tobacco by this age.

The trends are heading in the right direction, and this bill will help those numbers get smaller because, according to the youth smoking survey, more than half of children will still try tobacco. So it's well worth opening up the conversation and finding ways to prevent the habit for our young people.

Mr. Bill Walker: Good dads like you.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** There will be no smoking in my house; I'll tell you that right now for free.

Mr. Bill Walker: Nor in mine.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** No. When we go to visit Uncle Bill, there will be no smoking in his place.

We all have a friend or family member who has gotten sick or passed away. We heard some of those colleagues today talk about loved ones who they've had to watch fight this awful, awful disease and illness. It's a sad and terrible thing to see, and I wish it upon no one. It's important that we continue to implement anti-smoking education in our curriculum, in our students' health classes.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to have the Heart and Stroke Foundation folks in my office, and they filled me in on the awareness campaigns that they were doing. I'd like to commend them for their efforts in helping teach our youth about the effects of smoking.

Bringing it back closer to home, just last summer the region of Waterloo took the lead in exploring options to expand smoke-free legislation. The region already has a ban for smoking in public places like bleachers and seating areas at sports fields and parks. The bylaw did not include outdoor spaces like parks, playgrounds and athletic fields, so council and staff have taken this to the public and are undergoing consultations to amend their bylaws to address smoking proximities to sports fields and in public parks. Across Canada, more than 50 municipalities have taken it upon themselves to ban smoking in outdoor locations, and about one quarter of these towns and cities have bans that also include parks,

playgrounds and sports fields. Bill 131 would regulate this across the province, of course.

In fact, over the years, businesses like restaurants and bars, post-secondary schools and other public buildings have done a great job of implementing the regulations outlined in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which prohibits smoking in workplaces, enclosed public spaces and also in motor vehicles when children under 16 are present.

If you can only imagine, it was not too long ago when folks smoked in bars. In fact, you have to look at airplanes, a smoke-free environment. The thought that, at one time, back in the day, folks were smoking on air-

planes—I mean, it's just asinine, really.

In fact, I walked to work this morning and happened to walk down Wellesley into the government building, and there were about four or five folks out front having a cigarette. They were awfully close to the front door. I had to walk through a cloud of smoke, and of course they throw their butts on the ground; that drives me crazy. As you see spring finally getting here, on the ground there's a lot of litter, but nine times out of 10, it's the cigarette butts on the ground. People think that they somehow just disintegrate. You wouldn't throw a coffee cup out the window, yet people feel that it's okay to flick a cigarette butt. It drives me crazy. Anyways, I'm getting off Bill 131, but I had to mention that, because I did have that happen on my way in this morning.

As I had mentioned, many of these places have created designated smoking areas, and do a rather good job of enforcing it. These efforts have greatly reduced tobacco use and lowered health risks for non-smokers in Ontario like myself, my family and others who are here. Restaurants and bars have done a good job of implementing the regulations enforced by the Smoke-Free Ontario Act back when we made changes to it in 2006. We are no longer greeted by a host at a restaurant asking if we'd like a seat in the smoking or non-smoking section. They've gone completely smoke-free inside their businesses. There was some strife against us back in the mid-2000s, but businesses have done a good job of making the changes to make their locations easier to breathe in.

The question now is: Has Bill 131 gone too far, perhaps, by prohibiting smoking on patios of restaurants and bars? I have to mention, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association says that the ban will ultimately hurt their business. They have adapted since the changes were made to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act back in 2006 and are now happy with the current situation. The current act allows bar and restaurant owners to make their own decision to have smoking on their patio and base it on the type of customers that they serve.

Just this past weekend, I had the opportunity—we got busy on the weekend. We went out to Moose Winooski's, a local establishment in Kitchener. They've got a fairly large location. They've got a fairly large patio at the front and another one at the side. What they've done is, because there is a lot of concern from families, they've made the family patio in the back corner completely

smoke-free while still giving that option for smokers to go outside at the front patio and have a cigarette.

Business operators, like Tom Wideman and the Charcoal Group, who really accommodate at their facilities and offer families a nice, clean atmosphere to take their family to—I know a lot of families are looking forward to the summer, whenever it gets here, and they'll be occupying that patio, ensuring that their loved ones won't be subject to smoke of any sort. So we'd like to thank them for that and, of course, a lot of other owners moving in that direction.

There is a valid argument. I believe it should be up to the restaurant and bar owner whether they should ban smoking on their own patio or not. In terms of protecting our youth from being encouraged to smoke or breathing in second-hand smoke, most of the establishments who have customers that would go out on the patio for a smoke already ban youth from being in their bar or on their patio past 9 p.m. anyways, and even offer youth under the age of 19 a seat in their dining room area. It's too, perhaps, heavy-handed to create a ban for all patios. In fact, restaurants have proven that they can take it upon themselves to regulate smoking outside as they see fit, and the law already prevents smoking inside of these establishments.

Where we should be looking, though, is at the sale of tobacco products, and that's on universities and college campuses. Schools should be institutions of learning, not a place to develop bad habits, at least not smoking. Bill 131 prohibits sales on post-secondary education campuses, which will help reduce access to tobacco for

young people.

What this legislation fails to address, really, though, is the issue of contraband tobacco. This is a huge contributor to youth smoking, which should not be taken lightly. According to the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco, there are more illegal cigarettes in Ontario than anywhere else in the country. That is an interesting yet asinine statistic. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet with folks from the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco just a few weeks ago in my office. I believe they had done a study at one of the local high schools. A good percentage of the tobacco butts out front were, in fact, contraband. This is an alarming issue that people need to take an interest in.

We talk about increasing the fines on the sale of tobacco products to under-agers. It really is a start to cracking down on youth smoking, but it doesn't go far enough toward stopping the sale of cigarettes out of the back of someone's trunk in the parking lot of a high school, or in someone's university dorm room. They often say that contraband tobacco is fairly easy to get. You see the vans driving up and down the street bringing the cigarettes right to the establishment or right to the schools in our own communities. I know a lot of the stores do their best to ask for IDs and crack down on it at the store, but there is so much of this contraband going on simply out of a van, and we need to deal with that.

I know my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk has been a very vocal advocate in addressing this issue. In

fact, back in 2008, he put forward legislation which urged the government to crack down on illegal smoke shacks and contraband tobacco. He suggested that the province put an end to illegal tobacco and smoke shacks by increasing enforcement and reducing tobacco taxes. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has said that when this took place in the early 1990s, 300 smoke shacks vanished on the Six Nations overnight.

I'm sure everyone in the House has received a baggie of what 200 illicit cigarettes look like. My colleague who will be up next, from Leeds-Grenville, has, I think, one of those on his desk. I'll ask viewers to stay tuned for a preview of that a little bit later on. It's illegal cigarettes like these that are sold by criminals through a network of drug dealers which can give greater access for youth to cigarettes, cigarillos, cigars, chewing tobacco and other products. Young people can get a carton of cigarettes for as little as \$90 less than the legal product. Some cartons are cheaper than the price of just a movie ticket. In fact, members of the Retail Council of Canada, Crime Stoppers, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have joined together as 17 organizations to fight against the sale of illegal cigarettes, especially to our youth.

The Minister of Health begins to tackle this issue in Bill 131 by doubling the fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, but I would encourage the government to take a deeper look into the suggestions made by the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco and implement some of these recommendations at the committee stage so that we can continue to diminish this widespread problem.

However, I will have to interrupt and say that I do find it, obviously, quite rich that the government has called this bill back up for debate today. Of course, the Liberal Wynne government always chooses the most opportune times to toot their own horn and try to change the channel on the gas plant scandal, like coming across as a government that is protecting our youth from the harmful effects of smoking through Bill 131. We can't forget that this is the same Liberal government that wasted \$1.1 billion on cancelling gas plants to save some seats during the last election.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Speaker, the member is perfectly aware of standing order 23(b)(i), and I know that this digression is a wilful one. I would ask the Speaker to ensure that the member stays on topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I appreciate the reminder. I would say to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga that it is helpful if he keeps his remarks relevant to the debate, and I would encourage him to do so going forward. I would encourage all members of the House to ensure that their remarks are relevant with respect to the bill that we're debating.

The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. In fact, I just started talking about the timing of this all. I know it's interesting that the minute I talk about gas plants or \$1.1 billion, the government is up on its feet, trying to shut down and muzzle the opposition again. I know we've heard about letters that are servicing or people being served. Just the mention of a gas plant and they get knocked off their rockers.

Look, I'll— Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Kitchener–Conestoga to ensure that his remarks are relevant to the bill that we are debating.

The member for Kitchener-Conestoga has the floor.

Mr. Bob Delaney: You're part of the goaltenders'

fraternity. You can-

Mr. Michael Harris: Well, I had a couple of more things about that and—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Talk about hockey.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes. Well, I'll tell you, I don't know how smokers play hockey. I was a goalie, and I'd see them come in and they'd be just getting a puff of a cigarette in, and they'd be jumping on the ice. If that's not a problem waiting to happen, then I don't know what is.

Okay, so I'll move on from that, because I know you guys know where I was going to go with this. We'll have more time to talk about that tomorrow in question period. I'm glad to see the NDP back this afternoon.

Anyway, the fourth section of the bill, which I have not spoken about, is the flavoured tobacco products. There are many unique tobacco products out there that are used predominantly by adults in Ontario. These businesses, of course, have contacted my office and are concerned that Bill 131 would put them right out of business and potentially increase the illegal sale of flavoured tobacco products across the province. There is still a market out there for smokeless tobacco products like Copenhagen and Skoal. Products like these have been available to Canadians for over a century, and these businesses go through great efforts to ensure that their products are for adults only. Bill 131 would restrict the sale of these flavoured products, which is what makes them unique to customers. According to the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, there is a low prevalence of smokeless tobacco among youth and young adults. They believe that the ban is too broad in its definition and is unfair to adults who consume flavoured smokeless tobacco, and retailers who specialize in the sale of these products and wish to be exempted from the bill. For me, I've never really got into the smokeless tobacco products, but there is a market out there that does. I think the government should do a further study and consultation during the committee stage to ensure that you're not harming Ontario businesses if they do not contribute to youth smoking.

I know my time is done. I'll have a few minutes left on the recap. I'll look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues. I thank you, Speaker, for allowing me the time today to speak to Bill 131.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I encourage the member from Kitchener-Conestoga to continue having those open and frank discussions with your children, because I too was very open and frank, and I held no bars talking to both my boys. That's one thing that's missing out of this bill: How do you cope with kids that make the wrong decision? That's tough. I tell you it's tough. You've got to do it in a different way.

I can tell you from my personal experience that cancer has taken every loved one that I had in my family. It's taken away my dad, my mom, relatives. So I've seen the negative side of cancer. It's not pretty. It's not fun going into the hospital and seeing your dad or loved one who was a big man, 260 pounds, reduced to about 72 pounds. It's not something you want to see.

You try and have that discussion with your kids and your loved ones. I quit smoking 19 years ago, and I still quit smoking every day. It's not an easy task. It's tough, really tough, having those discussions, because there is so much pressure on those kids these days. There is so much peer pressure, so many added activities that are going on. So I commend you. Continue having those discussions with your kids. I wouldn't mind having a chat with you about my boys. Maybe you have some advice to give me. I'm open to suggestions, let me tell you. It is a tough situation. But this is a step in the right direction. I wish there was something in here that says how to deal with your boys, but there isn't, so I'll have to create that part, and hopefully I'll be able to amend it when it gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I have to say this: I have to commend the Minister of Health for all the work that she has done to help Ontarians to quit smoking.

As you know, in my first career I was a nurse, and I was working in the hospital. In the hospital, everybody was smoking. Now that I think about it, it's a bit embarrassing. Nurses were smoking; doctors were smoking, even in the patients' rooms. Patients in the delivery room were smoking. Everybody was smoking-bad. It was bad.

Now, I am embarrassed to say that I was one of them. But contrary to my friend from Manitoulin Island, I'll say to those who want to quit smoking, it's not difficult. I did it. You have to put your mind to it. The fact that I was listening to people saying, "It's so difficult. You know, 20 years later, I still have the urge to smoke regularly"so I was saying, "Oh, my God. I don't want to do that to myself." These opinions prevented me from quitting smoking. But when I did-you have to make the decision. It's like anything else. You quit smoking.

Each year, tobacco kills 13,000 people in Ontario-13,000 people—not just from lung cancer but from other types of cancer directly related to smoking: for example, bladder cancer, lip cancer and some skin cancers are

related to smoking.

So, kids who are listening, don't ever start; if you do, please quit smoking, and you will have a wonderful and happy life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ouestion and

comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely a pleasure to follow my colleague Mr. Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga. I'd just like to applaud him for being the role model father that he is to his boys, Brayden, Murphy and Lincoln. I think the best thing we can do is step up in front of our children and exhibit what we want them to be, particularly when it comes to their health. At an early age, children are very much influenced by the actions and the modelling that they see ahead of them. So, again, I applaud Michael.

Mr. Mantha, my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, spoke earlier. Mr. Prue has spoken. We've all seen what happens to people who smoke. I think what this bill—and I don't always agree with the Minister of Health on every single issue; the odd one, I do. This one I definitely support her on. We'll talk about Markdale Hospital another day. But I think she'll come around on that one,

Back to this bill, before Mr. Delaney stands up on a point of order: What we need to do here is we need to prohibit any sale of tobacco to youth, anything that's going to influence negatively our youth, because, as I say, in my role—and I take it very seriously—as critic of children and youth, children do not always have the ability to protect themselves, because they don't understand what may be the ramification 20 or 30 years down the road. They don't sometimes have the choice if their parents are smoking in a car and are subjecting them to that second-hand smoke or in their house or wherever it may be.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, Bill 131, I believe gives some opportunity for us to do the right thing for our next

generation, those pages sitting in front of you.

Like the Attorney General, I would, again, encourage all children, please, never start smoking, and if you are, stop today. Not only are you impacting your loved ones, but you're impacting our ability to provide health care for a lot of other maladies that are out there that people now aren't being able to get services for because we spend an enormous amount of money treating people with these cancers that are caused purely from something that is from these carcinogens in cigarettes—40,000 chemicals, I think I heard here today, in those cigarettes. It's deplorable.

I will be supporting this legislation. Again, I commend my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga-a great dad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? 1630

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I think that we all can agree that we're all supporting this bill. It's interesting to hear some of people's personal stories about some of their challenges and obstacles they have had to overcome if they were smokers or had family members

that they saw suffering from the results of cigarette smoking.

But I looked up some information on teens, because we're talking about our young people and how young people start smoking. There are 11 facts about teen smoking that I'd like to share. Ninety per cent of smokers began before the age of 21. That's information that perhaps we can use when the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton talked about prevention. If we know that that's a targeted age group that starts smoking before the age of 21, maybe we need to do things differently. We need to change behaviours, how people view smoking, and maybe talk about it a lot more to your children when they are young, as the member from Kitchener-Conestoga is doing, so that they realize that this is not something that's a habit you want to engage in, because it can take you a lifetime to quit. Then, unfortunately, when they come to realize that it's not a good habit, it could be a little too late.

Another item is that every day, almost 3,900 adolescents under the age of 18 try their first cigarette, and more than 950 of them will become daily smokers. Those are really shocking figures. I think what we have to do—and maybe we've tried this before, and I know it's happening, and we're trying really hard—is, we have to break the cycle of the generation before us, becoming smokers where we are today. I think a lot of education and getting kids opportunities where they can substitute behaviours for smoking that are healthy choices would be something we can all work towards.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Kitchener—Conestoga has the opportunity to reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Algoma–Manitoulin, the Attorney General, of course, the astute Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and London–Fanshawe, I believe. I think it's the personal stories, as Mr. Mantha talked about, that really hit home.

It's an interesting stat that 90% of smokers start before the age of 21, which is why it's so important to get to our young folks at an early age and tell them about the effects—long-term effects and short-term effects—of what smoking is all about. I thank my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who I know, as a father, has instilled in his children, boys, that this is something that they'd much rather spend their money elsewhere on. I don't know how people even afford to do it, if you ask me. That's one major deterrent of doing it.

I never miss an opportunity when I see a smoker outside in the wintertime, when I have the kids in the car, to point to them and say, "Look at that guy. Do you want to be out there smoking in the freezing cold? How does that make any sense at all?" I will continue to remind my children at every turn that this is something that they want to avoid doing.

We only need to look in our hospitals today and our loved ones who have succumbed to cancer and a lot of other terminal illnesses because of their choice of habits when they were younger. I know a lot of them, after

quitting years and years later, feel that they're a new person, that the health impacts, the things that they can now do—play with their children, play sports—will mean a lot.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 131, and I'll leave it at that.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that you'll find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding late shows.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to bring forward a motion regarding late shows. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the late show requested by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk to the Minister of Energy scheduled for Tuesday, April 1, 2014, be rescheduled to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 2, 2014.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved that the late show requested by the member of Haldimand–Norfolk to the Minister of Energy scheduled for Tuesday, April 1, be rescheduled to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 2, 2014. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

# YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. *Applause*.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thank you to the government House leader for that thunderous applause.

I'm pleased to provide a few comments on the record regarding Bill 131, which is An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and various regulations. I know the government has its short name as the Youth Smoking Prevention Act.

A number of speakers have come forward this afternoon to make some very good comments. I think from our caucus's perspective we've already had some speakers indicating that we're supportive. There are a number of amendments that I know I would like to pursue at committee, especially on contraband tobacco, illegal tobacco, as the community safety critic for our party.

As most members have already acknowledged, the bill's going to prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports

fields, and restaurant and bar patios. In addition, it's going to double fines for those who sell tobacco to youth. The fines would ultimately be the highest in Canada. The bill would also ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products, and I'm going to talk a little bit about that at the start of my presentation. Finally—and I know the member for Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned this because of the universities and colleges in his community—it would also prohibit sales on post-secondary educational campuses and other specified provincial government properties. So there are a number of issues regarding this bill that would deal with smoking, and specifically, as the minister has said on a couple of occasions, youth smoking.

There have been some folks who have expressed concern. I know that the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association has indicated some issues regarding the issues of businesses and the impact on their industry. I hope that when the bill gets into committee, they'll come forward and they'll lay those concerns on the table. I know I haven't had any specific people in my riding outline any concerns about that, but I know that we should, as part of the democratic process, give them a chance to put any concerns they have on the table.

Recently, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society met with a number of MPPs about both Bill 131 and also Bill 21. I had the pleasure of meeting with them. I know that they had a number of tobacco facts that they outlined at that meeting that I would like to get on the record, Speaker: "Tobacco use kills 13,000 people in Ontario each year." It's responsible for "30% of all cancer deaths and 85% of lung cancer deaths; 57,000 grade 6 to 12 Ontario youth used flavoured tobacco products in 2010-11"-and that is a very disturbing statistic.

They were very supportive of Bill 131. I know that specifically on restricting tobacco retail to young people, they indicated a statistic: "The highest smoking rates in Ontario exist in the young adult population from ages 20 to 24." Restricting the sale of tobacco on post-secondary campuses, they feel, will address the supply side of tobacco control and make it less accessible for young

people who attend those institutions.

I had a very good meeting with them. I got a lot of good things on the record. The one thing, though, I do notice in the package is a prop. So through you, Speaker, I'd like to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms—just so I won't use it—if you could come and take this prop away from me. This is actually something they gave us showing a Fruit Roll-Up and a cigar that's got a strawberry on the front. I'm actually going to ask you to take this away from me so I don't use it in my speech. Anybody who can see it basically, it looks like the same thing. The Fruit Roll-Up

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I must give the member full marks for his creativity, but I am also obligated to remind the House that it's inappropriate to use props while they are making their presentations in the House.

The member for Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: And I want to thank you very much, Speaker, for clarifying that.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: No, no, no, through you to the member—I felt very strongly, and I know Ms. Gélinas from Nickel Belt mentioned the fact that some of the packaging of the cigars—the flavoured cigar in this case was a strawberry cigar—looked almost identical to the Fruit Roll-Ups. I do have a number of papers around it and I do get a bit animated. I just wouldn't want to get carried away, Speaker, but I appreciate your diligence. 1640

One of the things I did yesterday was walk down to the corner store, just around the corner from my house. It's called the Oxford Corner Store. I talked to the clerk there, a young woman named Sierra, and I asked Sierra to indulge me and show me some of the flavoured tobacco products that she had there. She lifted up the power wall and was able to show me a number of flavoured products. I was actually surprised at the amount of flavoured tobacco products that were on sale at that location. What surprised me the most were the flavours. I was shocked to find products she showed me that were flavoured grape, chocolate, peach, cherry, watermelon, strawberry—there was one café mocha cigar; I found that was a bit strange-cream, mint, and then also the traditional flavours; for those who would remember, the rumand wine-dipped product or the cherry and vanilla product.

The other products that she showed me were some of the smokeless products. When I went to university in Waterloo, I roomed with a couple of local Brockvillians who were baseball players, so I was familiar with some of the smokeless products and some of the chewing tobacco that baseball players would use. In those old days, you had what I think was called Red Man chew flavour, and they would pack it into a ball and put it in their mouth, but they would normally wrap it with flavoured gum. They would wrap it with bubble gum, Juicy Fruit or something that actually had a sweeter flavour to it, and put it in their mouth when they were out playing baseball. I was familiar with some of these products. When I was at the Oxford Corner Store and spoke to Sierra, I was surprised at the amount of those smokeless products that were there. People call them dip. It's essentially like a moist snuff that they use, again, flavoured consistently with the candy fruit flavour. They had citrus, cherry, mint and then the straight-on products. It was very interesting to see the volume of those products.

Even though when I asked Sierra whether those products were specifically purchased by young people, I was surprised that she didn't feel that way; that wasn't the market that normally came into that store to purchase products-not to say that it didn't end up in the hands of young people, because clearly some of the statistics show that a number of young people have tried these flavoured products. I was just surprised at the amount that was there in the smokeless variety, the dips and the chews, but also in cigars and other products like that.

I noticed another document, if you can indulge me, Speaker, from October 2013. The Canadian Cancer Society had a number of pictures that showed us some of the changes with some of the different flavours. It wasn't just in the cigarillos, which ultimately became flavoured cigars, but also some of the other tobacco products that are used in water pipes, in every flavour possible. There was banana, melon, coconut, cola, Tropicana, cinnamon, apple, liquorice, cappuccino and caramel, so you see the volume of flavoured products that were available for sale.

I was, again, quite shocked that there were that many of those flavoured products on the market. Obviously, the prop that I'd given, through you, to the Sergeant-at-Arms showed exactly what Ms. Gélinas and the Minister of Health were saying, that we can't have these products being packaged specifically for young people to make them look like a bag of candy or a Fruit Roll-Up. I certainly had my eye opened yesterday at my local corner store in talking to Sierra about that issue.

I've also had a number of meetings with some groups. The Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association met with me recently. They had given me some statistics regarding youth smoking in their slide deck. As of 2011, the RCMP identified over—this is just on the contraband side—175 organized crime groups involved in the contraband cigarette trade.

One statistic that was interesting: The Canadian Medical Association Journal reported in August 2012 that 22% of youth smokers consumed contraband and smoked more than their peers. So I applaud the legislation for taking away the flavoured side of tobacco, which would be targeted for our young people, but I'm also concerned that price is a determinant for making these decisions. If we don't also include something in this bill to deal with that illegal tobacco trade, I think we've failed our young people. Clearly, when we look at those statistics, like the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association's claim that you've got a significant population of young people deciding to smoke the cheaper illegal product, I think we have to, if we're actually going to target youth smoking—it's great to deal with the flavoured product. We have to deal, I suggest, with the illegal product.

I'm going to take a couple of moments just to put some comments on the record regarding what I think should be changed. Also, I think it's important to try to educate MPPs in this whole side of the business.

One of the things that I would like to put on the record is a magazine called FrontLine Security. This is a reprint edition, and I'm going to be quoting from it with some statistics regarding the illegal product.

One of the stories that's written by FrontLine's senior writer, Richard Bray, is entitled "Contraband tobacco: It's a Crime." One of the spokespersons for the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco, Gary Grant, talks about targeting young people. I'm just going to quote briefly from Mr. Bray's story on page 22 in volume 8, issue 2, of FrontLine Security.

"Targeting young people.

"Criminals are intent on getting a new generation of kids hooked on smoking. Canadian regulations, such as requiring photo ID for purchasing cigarettes from retailers, banning cigarette ads, and hiding tobacco from view in stores, are all intended to prevent young people from getting access to tobacco. But these are undermined by the ready availability of low-cost contraband tobacco. A 'baggie' of 200 contraband cigarettes can cost as much as \$70 or \$80 less' than a legal product, and, as I'm sure you know, contraband dealers, illegal dealers, obviously wouldn't ask for ID.

We've had the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco send us some similar statistics.

Maybe we can get the Sergeant-at-Arms to come again, because I found that I have another issue. So if you want to come grab this. You know, kids can get these bags for less than the cost of a movie ticket. This isn't actually cigarettes, Speaker; it's just cardboard. But it's still a prop and I want—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is a prop. I have to again say to all members of the House that it's inappropriate to use props. I don't know if you have any more in the envelope or not. But I understand: You are making the point very effectively. I would just again caution the member on the fact we can't do it.

The Minister of Education.

**Hon.** Liz Sandals: I would like to commend the member for his props that may be or may not be in order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate that, too.

The member for Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad to get that off my desk, but I think it does show that these baggies that are being sold are being sold at significantly less cost. That document from the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco really spells it out, that a young person, for about the same price as a movie ticket, could get a bag of contraband tobacco at a significantly lesser cost than the traditional legal product. I think if we're going to deal with youth smoking—and that's the short title; that's the government title for this bill. The catchy title is the Youth Smoking Prevention Act. If, in fact, we're going to provide a vehicle to reduce youth smoking, we have to also, in addition to dealing with the flavoured product, deal with the illegal product, and it's a big business.

I have to tell you a story. I worked for the Brockville Recorder and Times, just before I started working for my predecessor, Senator Runciman, when he was the MPP. I was the circulation manager at the Brockville Recorder and Times daily. We had a number of contractors that delivered our newspaper product. We had a number of employees who would insert flyers into the newspaper. We were an afternoon paper. The one morning paper would be the Saturday morning paper, which would take place overnight. For one reason or the other, one of the contractors that delivered these newspapers to dealers and carriers, their contract was terminated by the company. They decided that they would go a different direction.

1650

A funny thing happened that Friday night: I came to the newspaper, and I had a number of employees tell me that we terminated the contract of their supplier, that unknown to me, a number of employees were getting bags of those cigarettes under the cover of darkness while most of the employees weren't at the paper. It shocked me, because I had no idea about the depth of purchase of contraband tobacco, illegal tobacco, in the riding. It was a real eye-opener for me, that right under my own nose, as an employee, as a manager at the newspaper, that illegal product was getting into that company. It was, as I said, a real eye-opener.

This magazine, as well, gives me a number of statistics on why this is such a crime that I think we all have to put our minds to. One carton of 200 cigarettes has potential tax revenue for the government of \$65 a carton; the potential illicit gain value is about 35 bucks a carton. So if you start looking at a master case of 50 cartons of illegal tobacco, that has a potential illicit gain of about \$1,750; the potential tax revenue lost for the government of Ontario would be about \$3,250. You go to an SUV, which would have four master cases; a van that would have 10; a cube van that would have 20; right up to a tractor-trailer that would have 1,400 master cases of illegal tobacco at a potential illicit gain of \$2.45 million. It costs approximately \$5 to produce 200 cigarettes, with a selling price of about \$400 a carton. So, again, for those who buy the legal product, when you look at the potential illicit gain and you look at the tax revenue loss for the government, it's an eye-opener. It's unbelievable.

One of the things that the Ontario government did recently—this was a couple years ago in June 2011—was they transferred, through new legislation, the responsibility of licensing raw leaf tobacco from the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board to the Ontario Ministry of Revenue. Just days before the transfer took effect, the ministry, in a news release, gave a temporary grace period in terms of dealing with that. So when we talk about different measures that could be put forward to deal with illicit tobacco sales, the enforcement of the Ministry of Revenue on that raw-leaf tobacco would be one of those measures that I think should be considered by a committee when this bill is put forward.

One of the members, I think it was the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, talked about the federal government. I also see in this magazine that it talks about the new task force that the federal government put forward: The Harper government announced a 50-officer RCMP Anti-Contraband Tobacco Force. I know one of the members opposite asked, "What is the federal government doing?" Well, they did create this anti-contraband task force which they hoped would be able to work with other jurisdictions to deal with the problem. It's a fascinating issue. One that I think is missed in this piece of legislation.

I do recognize some of the components in the bill. I recognize that the member for Nickel Belt had a similar bill, and I appreciated being in the House today to hear some of her ideas and suggestions. I do think that some of the things that this bill will stop, like some of the promotional materials—I think the member for Nickel

Belt mentioned where you buy a pack of cigarettes and you get a free lighter. I agree that some of those issues should be stopped, that we shouldn't be providing promotional materials when we're selling tobacco, but I also believe that there's an issue for the government. I heard loud and clear from the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and from the Korean Businessmen's Association about their concerns about the government possibly raising tobacco taxes in the budget and the net impact that would have. I think some of the statistics that we've seen show that that's not what these groups want to see this government put forward.

I think we need to have a very concerted effort on getting after the illegal product and getting it out of the system, but I do recognize that there are some things in this bill that are supported by all three parties, and I look forward to the bill getting to committee, to be able to drive some of those amendments forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Speaker. And I want to thank you for your assistance with getting the props off of my desk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Ouestions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up today to talk about Bill 131 and to respond to, quite honestly, a very well researched—and I think the member from Leeds–Grenville has presented a very compelling—case to support the bill.

Of course, we've all heard from our critic on this issue, the member from Nickel Belt, who has championed the issue of prevention around youth smoking and the flavoured cigarette products.

I think that this is interesting timing. We're seeing a number of pieces of legislation come forward in a very quick manner, even though, quite honestly, the government has sat on this issue for a long time. So timing is everything, I guess.

As a mother of a 15-year-old, I'd like to say that I want to see every measure put in place which would make the accessibility of cigarette products—raise the bar. Make that the highest level.

There is a vulnerability that exists within youth today. When I was president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, we also championed the issue of media and the influence that media have on youth, especially around violence and around stigma and issues that pertain to youth in today's world. The peer pressure which existed when we were young is still there today, but it's hyped up because social media has played such a strong role in it as well.

I do think the member for Leeds–Grenville has made some very good points and I actually will take a lesson out of his creative use of not using props. I must put that down in my lesson book on MPP 101. I look forward to further debate on the issue of youth smoking prevention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm very pleased to rise in my place and speak about the Youth Smoking Prevention

Act. Mr. Speaker, to speak on this bill, we need to know what this act is all about. The act is about protecting and preventing youth from tobacco use. A wise person has said that prevention is better than a cure. That is why our government introduced Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act. It's all about that Ontarians live healthy lives; this is what this bill is about.

This bill, if passed, would save \$1.9 billion in direct health costs and \$5.8 billion in indirect health costs, such

as lost productivity.

Mr. Speaker, this is not only that all of the members in this House support this bill, but we have support from outside as well, such as that 66% of people in Ontario want smoking to be prohibited on restaurant and bar patios, and 58 Ontario municipalities representing 61% of the population already ban smoking on playgrounds.

Many organizations, such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Rowena Pinto, vice-president, public affairs and strategic initiatives, Canadian Cancer Society; and the Ontario Lung Association—all these organizations

support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, we should pass this bill as soon as possible and send it to committee so that we can further have a debate in committee and hear from the stakeholders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1700

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a pleasure to get up and to speak about the words from my neighbouring colleague from Leeds—Grenville. I was quite intrigued with the props, because I know that we're not allowed to use props—

Ms. Laurie Scott: But they were appropriate.

Mr. Jim McDonell: But they were appropriate.

Especially in my riding, with the contraband cigarettes, it's a major issue. Being on the health unit at one time, studies have shown that upwards of around 85% or 90% of the cigarettes that are being smoked at local high schools are actually contraband. Really, I think if we want to have some impact, I have some ideas on that.

But I always disagreed with seeing children out on the street smoking at a high school, where, really, they're outside the authority of the teachers and principals so that they have no way of counteracting who's in the group, who's selling what. I think if you were to talk to some of the older principals who talk about when they had spots on school property, they controlled who was there, so the groups were smaller. It was not the cool thing to be at that time.

Of course, when you're not allowed to buy the contraband cigarettes or whatever is being delivered there, cigarettes are more expensive, harder to get, harder to come by. I think that sometimes you have to look at the results of what you're doing. I believe moving people out to the sidewalk is an issue that is only actually encouraging it. We see an uptake in cigarette smoking, and I believe that's part of it.

But there's no question for people who remember before the days that the health risks were known, cigarettes played a huge part in most people's families, as they've had loved ones who have passed away with cancer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Based on the comments that came from my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, just a little word of advice: You've got to learn to bring those props up at the right time, but you also have to put them back down in order to get some leeway from the Chair.

C'est avec plaisir que je me lève pour offrir un peu de commentaires sur ce projet de loi, le projet de loi 131. Je veux remercier la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, qui a apporté le projet de loi en avant. Puis je veux vraiment reconnaître et féliciter France Gélinas, notre députée pour la région de Nickel Belt, qui a vraiment été une championne sur le sujet de la prévention à fumer, surtout envers les enfants.

Cet après-midi, j'étais assis dans mon bureau et je parlais avec mon assistante, mon adjointe. Tout d'un coup, on a regardé dans la malle et on a reçu deux petits cadeaux. Et puis je lui ai dit : « Donne donc ça à ton enfant. C'est des bonbons. C'est quelque chose avec quoi il va être capable de s'amuser. »

Elle les prend et les met sur son pupitre, et puis tout d'un coup elle revient et dit : « Bien, voyons donc. » Un était un bonbon aux fraises, et l'autre était vraiment un paquet de tabac qui avait un goût de cerise dedans. J'ai regardé les deux, et puis c'était essentiellement ça. Il y avait deux paquets et j'étais totalement pris par surprise que les deux paquets—je pensais que c'était des bonbons.

C'est vraiment quelque chose sur quoi je veux encourager les gens à payer attention. Si on est pour protéger nos enfants, il faut vraiment qu'on regarde la prévention, et surtout la façon dont les produits sont délivrés et comment ils attirent nos enfants et leur curiosité. C'est ce qui les attire vers les produits, et puis c'est assez « in style », on va dire, pour essayer un petit goût, comme tous les autres le font. Vraiment, il faut qu'on les regarde et qu'on prenne le temps de parler à nos enfants et faire certain qu'on les garde bien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Leeds—Grenville for his response.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the members from Kitchener-Waterloo, Mississauga-Brampton South, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Algoma-Manitoulin for your comments to my address today. I appreciate all the advice that I've received about how I've used all of these wonderful gifts that all these organizations—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have no more props to show. They've all been confiscated by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

I would like to quote from another document that I received. This is the Anti-Illicit Trade in Tobacco media monitoring from January 2014. One of the publications that it quotes from is actually from my alma mater, the University of Waterloo. It's a document called Tobacco Use in Canada from the Propel Centre for Population

Health Impact, the 2013 edition. The quotation in the document said, "This edition of the report provides, for the first time, data on the use of flavoured tobacco among youth. This shift from cigarettes to other forms of tobacco is a real concern, as more youth aged 15 to 19 have smoked a cigarillo than have smoked a whole cigarette."

I think it's very important that we're having this debate about the flavoured products, given some of the studies that are out there.

However, again, I want to reiterate that I believe the whole issue of illegal tobacco needs to be addressed by the committee that will be dealing with this bill. I think there should be amendments. I'm going to quote from, again, this media monitoring. It was from an Ottawa Citizen story on January 3 called "Quick Fixes Won't Work." It says, "According to a report from Ontario's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, contraband ... is now the number one source of cigarettes for youth."

So again, I think we need to deal with the illegal product. We need to have it as part of this bill. We can't just forget about it. It is the number one issue that's dealing with our young people. It should be in the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to get up to speak to Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act. I have to say, I'm somewhat surprised that we're talking about this bill now. The issues with youth unemployment being so high, I thought that might be on. The member from High Park said it's actually been four and a half months since we last talked about this bill. I just wonder, the priority this week, but I'll leave that. I know where we're going. I'm just wondering why this is brought up this week. Maybe a bit of a channel changer.

Smoking's an addiction that, as far as my family, certainly hit it very hard over the years. It's something that's very difficult to quit. I know many people who have tried over the years to quit smoking, and very few of them have been successful. It's not something that I would wish on anybody. So really, prevention is key.

I had a father who tried many, many times to quit. I always remember a story while talking to him—in the early 1960s, we had built a barn on the farm. This is before the supply management, and money was pretty tight. In those days, your plans were generally in your head. It was a large project, a large new dairy barn to replace one that had burned about 10 years before, before my time. But renovating and building, you get into a problem. Even though he had stopped smoking, when he ran into a problem and he'd solve it, he'd have to light up. He just said, "You know, it's funny. If I don't have that cigarette in my hand—it's just something I've grown so used to, I just can't get through to solve the issues that are in front of me." I think that talks about the seriousness of the addiction, and it is an addiction.

You look back and in those days, he probably wanted to quit just for the idea of the money, because cigarette smoking was expensive even back then. It didn't seem to be a lot of money, but there wasn't a lot of money around. He was a person who ran a dairy farm, sold seed on the side, did a lot of things just to make enough money for—we had a family of 11 children at that time, so there were a lot of mouths to feed. I remember looking at one of the paycheques in March for a week back then, and the milk cheque was \$7. So it certainly was a challenge, and smoking would be part of it, and then trying to do the investments it took in the farm when there really was no money, like building the new barn.

When I look back, the 200 acres we had at the time has grown to 1,000 acres and a much larger dairy barn, but we still use that. So it talks about the investment and the cost of cigarettes.

As I say, when I look at the other issues, the life expectancy of smokers, clearly, as we go back to that time—when I first started going to school, there were really no details on life expectancy. It was all around the money.

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We used to have this lady come around to our school. She was a volunteer. Mrs. McKelvy was her name. The first talk about cigarettes—she came by once a year—would be about the cost of smoking and the opportunity cost by smoking and what you're losing out of your income and how much over a lifetime that would cost. Sitting there in grade 3 or 4, it didn't have an impact, I would think, at that time. I know that—I have a sister-in-law who was a teacher at the time—a lot of teachers didn't really enjoy that because they were all smokers, and they smoked in the class. That was standard at that time

Even when I got my first job at Bell, there was a lot of talk about the special ashtrays we had. They were all set up to avoid fires. That was the talk—about using the safety ashtray; it wasn't about the health impacts. All that information came in later, as we identified some of the issues around lung cancer and the other issues with smoking. It certainly had a big impact on families, just through the disposable income.

But I think that when you look at education, it is key. We have to do things with our young children to make sure that they don't get started. I hear about the flavoured tobacco and some of the past opportunities where some of that came back, and it was changed—or companies changed it to get around the law. Of all the issues I have with cigarettes, I think that is the most significant to me, because I really see that as an attempt at getting people hooked on it. It's a terrible thing to get hooked on. It's something I think we, as a Legislature, all agree that we don't want to go there. I think that is a classic example of circumventing the intent of the law, which is trying to outlaw this to children, and changing a few technicalities and continuing that. I'd like to see this legislation probably do more to stop that because I think that was where we have a large impact. I think that through committee, maybe, we could get some of that done.

I look at some of the intense campaigns over the last 10 years, and I think it's beginning to work. We've

gotten to a level where we actually see a bit of a kickback in the numbers, and more and more people are smoking, so definitely more has to be done. I think that that's our job here, to look at how we can have an impact. I don't think we necessarily beat up the people who are smoking. I think that some of them smoked—I guess that group is getting older now and there are less of them who started before there was an issue. Actually, in a lot of cases, people who came to the war were encouraged to smoke by the government. It was a way of passing the time in the trenches, you might say, so really there was a large group of people who started almost through no fault of their own. It was a way of passing time when times were slow in bad times. So I think we have to look at that.

We talk about the high schools, and I mentioned before about pushing students out to the street. When I went to school, we used to have a smoking room. You didn't have to smoke to be in the room, but that was the only place in school that we were allowed to smoke. I looked at the people in there—about half of them at the time smoked. It wasn't a reason to be there. You weren't in the public eye. I won't say that I'm encouraging that, but I guess if we're going to allow a group of people to smoke, I would rather see it on school property than out in public, where we don't know who's out in public. I go back to something that was said on the health unit board by Gary Barton—he was a past principal of VCI in Vankleek Hill. He said, "When the smoking area was on the school property, I could go out and monitor who was actually there." He says, "I go out there today. I know people are selling drugs, selling contraband cigarettes. I ask them to leave, and they basically told me that I have no authority on public property and that if these people want to stay there, they have all the rights in the world." I think that's a problem.

If we really want to stop people from smoking, I think we should take our lessons from alcohol. I just wonder why it's not a \$100 fine or \$80 fine-some fine-if you're underage and you're smoking. We go after the people who get them the cigarettes the best we can. We know that in our area, it's somewhere over 85% of the cigarettes smoked-in this area around the school: they've done tests on it—that are contraband. We aren't really doing anything by going after the store owners. I think what we have to do is go over the results, and part of that is taking away their audience. That's all we've created for these people is an audience. If you travel through the roads of—well, South Glengarry, Dundas and Stormont county, every time you pass a high school, you'll see a crowd of 30 students out front any time of the day. They're sitting on road property—sometimes not the safest place to be; in the city, it can be quite dangerous. Really there's an audience there. There are people who are selling these products who aren't our students, and we can say nothing about it. But I would like something that would go after the people who are really breaking the law, and those are the people who are underage smoking.

As I said, I sat on the health unit for a number of years and had the occasion to talk about some of the issues

around youth smoking and saw some of the stats in our area. Generally, if you get into an area of low income—average incomes in my riding are lower than the provincial average for sure—we see that there's a higher percentage of people smoking. I think these are people who generally don't have the money to smoke—disposable income. You see, again, people who are smoking when really it would be better if they could put their money elsewhere. Very few of the people I meet who are smoking actually want to smoke. Most of the people I talk to complain about smoking; they're hooked on it. It's something, especially for that group of people, that's very tough. We have to do something to keep them off that. I think there's more work to be done.

In my area, of course, we're referred to as the contraband capital of Canada, with the number of smokes that come through there. You go back not too long—before I got involved in municipal politics, there were guns being fired on the St. Lawrence, along the St. Lawrence, and people were scared. We had a couple of instances on the reserve where a couple of people were shot and a couple of people were killed, so it took some action. But that's what you get when you get involved with organized crime. We see the results all the time. We see very young teenagers with large, expensive vehicles.

If you talk to some of the members of society at Akwesasne, they're worried about their youth, too. It's hard when that kind of money is so readily available and they see their friends doing it—for them to stay out of it and to pursue an education. So it's hurting everybody. It's hurting all societies. Cottage owners and house owners are being told, "At 10 o'clock tonight, I don't want to see you around the house; and if you are, maybe something will happen." A lot of people are seniors, and they're scared.

Interjection: It's hard to believe.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, and they're leaving. They're afraid to say anything. The police—I know we have a special detachment of the RCMP down there who have a special agreement with the federal government, the OPP, and they enforce this area very heavily. People don't know why they can't stop it. But when you can come over in a boat at night or Ski-Doo at night, it's very hard to track somebody down. When you've got the local population worried about saying anything, it's not a good situation. I know some people my way whose children have gotten involved and are facing prison terms. So it really has a big impact not only on the smokers but also society.

Something has to be done about the contraband. One of the access points we have with it is of course this audience that we're creating down on high school properties, and I think that's something we have to look at.

I always felt sorry about some of our law-abiding corner stores. I know my feeling—a friend of mine operates a store, and he hires high school students to come in. It's their first job. They do all they can—the tobacco police come through—I would say through some intimidation, to trick them into selling. I know my

daughter used to work there. She used to comment that her friends used to come in when they were of age—she's 28 now—and she wouldn't sell to them. But of course you get somebody who's working, 16 years old, first job—a number of cases where somebody has walked in and they get fined \$500 or \$600. One person I knew who only worked—first day of work, a couple of hours' work, all of a sudden he has a \$600 fine. Really, that's not the root of the problem. These are people who are really trying to stop it, but the whole situation is trouble, especially when you look at the products the kids are actually smoking.

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I think that we have to look at results. We have to look at education—trying to get out and talk to people about the issues that are occurring here, whether it be contraband or illegal cigarettes. It's got to come down to making it not classy to smoke. I think that we've done a pretty good job with that. We've moved ahead on doing some of that.

I would like to see amendments so that there is—not making it just a ticketing event on a person. It's like alcohol; it's not a record, but it hits them in the pocketbook. It makes it a little more expensive. We had a chance—our leader, Tim Hudak, and I went down and we met with the special investigations unit in Cornwall. They weren't recommending that we lower the taxes. They saw that as a problem, because if we do that—there's organized crime in this area—they would just move to a different product, whether it be drugs or guns, or humans. So it's a bigger issue. It's something we have to be very careful about. It's a matter of working at that and talking to the groups, and people like the special forces that are in there, to get their impression of what needs to be done.

When you look at the impact, the people I know—and I think we've heard it a number of times: It touches almost every family. My father, who I talked about, tried many times to quit smoking; he eventually had heart disease, likely caused from tobacco use over the years. It was only at that time that he was able to guit. Eventually, it was cancer that took him at about 71 years old; some say that it was much too young an age. Seeing people whittle away and lose weight-it's a terrible way to go. I commend the Legislature for trying to make a difference on this. We have to try to do better, try to step in and look at the science and see where we can make a change, and I really believe in making it illegal to actually possess cigarettes if you're under 19-if that's a law. There's lots to be done in that area, and it's a matter of changing the culture. We have to work with the tobacco producers as a team—something that we have to work at is that it's got to be in nobody's best interests to encourage young people to smoke.

On the other hand, we have some people who are a little older, like myself, who have been smoking, and I don't want to see them necessarily beat up either. I think we've done everything we can to help them. We probably could use some more programs. But, again, I dis-

agree with the idea of forcing them out onto the sidewalks. Especially because I go by the hospital and I see people out there with different medical apparatus, I see doctors and nurses out there-there's about 200 feet of green grass between the hospital and the street, and what you're really wondering is, are you really doing anything for these people? They're not smoking because they want to. It's a terrible addiction. They'd be the first people to admit to that. Can we not be a little more compassionate, and work with them and make sure that they're away from the entrance to the hospital? We have to allow them to go through their life and make the best of a bad situation. Because, really, that's what it is. We all deserve a smoke-free environment, but this has nothing to do with that. These people, they're 10, 15 metres away from the door of the building. Let them enjoy that little bit of life that they seem to enjoy.

It's an expensive habit. We make very much money from the taxes on it, which, I guess, if there is an upside, there's a little bit to that. I know that if you look at the amount of revenue that comes in from cigarettes, if we take that and put it back into health care and other issues—it's probably not an overall winner, but it helps alleviate some of the arguments about the smoking and the cost of it. People that certainly do smoke pay high taxes and they certainly accomplish some of that.

I know Dr. Paul, the local medical officer of health—a lot of stats, a lot of investigation into some of the results; what starts smoking. I think working with people like this, people in the know that have looked through the science, looked at different countries—what's worked, what hasn't worked—is really where we have to go to get rid of this terrible affliction, really. We have to make the products very hard for young people to get and make it so that it's not the cool thing—not giving them the opportunity that if you want to belong to a group, you have to smoke. I think that's another reason why we want to get rid of that group sitting out on the sidewalk smoking. It's just a bad situation.

Dr. Paul talked about the amount of smoking in our area, the other problems that it has, the determinants of health. It affects birth rates. It affects newborns coming through. There are just so many things wrong with this. In a lot of cases, a lot of the youth who are going through this have no idea or haven't heard that story. By the time that they find out about it, it's because they have a problem. They maybe have a child who has got some defects or issues. Percentage-wise, there's a number of those that go back to the cause of smoking during pregnancy. If there's a connection there, it's our job to make sure people know that.

Anyway, I'm looking forward to some real change on this issue. It's an issue that I see very much locally and in my family. I would like to see something that finally works on stopping eigarette smoking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South-Glengarry for his contribution to the debate on this bill.

Speaker, it's good to see that we are trying to focus and target youth smoking prevention, because we know that that's the generation that is next up for this nasty habit to grab a hold of. It's difficult to shake that habit once you get involved in that habit.

As I mentioned earlier, I've been looking up some facts on teens specifically, because we're talking about youth. Another interesting item that I wasn't aware of that was a side effect of smoking, whether you're an adult or a teen—but this was a very interesting fact—is that teen smokers are more likely to have panic attacks, anxiety disorders and depression. I'm glad some of the pages are here today, because I was unaware that there would be some kind of mental health effects to smoking. Obviously, it's an addiction, but if it actually means that you're more likely to experience those things, that's something that we really need to consider, because in addition to the physical health side effects that come with smoking, there's also mental health side effects that come with smoking. So, Speaker, I found that fact really interesting. Of course, when people are smoking, and if they do have these so-called panic attacks or anxiety attacks, they probably end up smoking more because of the stress factor involved with that. So it seems like a vicious circle.

But this bill, I hope, does impact the fact that we can prevent youth from taking up smoking. It's a good piece maybe to start educating youth a little more on the facts about smoking and driving that home and making it more of a serious issue, because it certainly is something that's a lifestyle choice, but it can be changed. You can choose a healthier option.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 131. I listened attentively to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the whole comment of contraband cigarette selling to young people, but, more importantly, about the negative health effects in terms of smoking and long-term effects in terms of the whole community.

As someone who has dealt most of my career in public health, the anti-tobacco legislation across Ontario—I have been working actively for over 20 years on this whole file. I know my colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, as a former medical officer of health in York region, has also done exemplary work when it comes to tobacco legislation and preventing smoking among young people.

We know the reason why the government and, as well, as I heard attentively, all members of the House are supporting the proposed Bill 131: to make our province the healthiest province in Canada. The only way we can make this province the healthiest one is by ensuring every young person in our province does not start smoking, because we know the data shows that when they haven't started smoking before age 25, they will not start smoking.

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At the end of the day, the goal of the proposed bill is to ensure that the smoking rates in Ontario are the lowest in Canada. Right now, our tobacco smoking rate is about 19%, according to the data. That represents over 255,000 smokers. Our goal through this proposed legislation, if passed, is to reduce the incidence of smoking, but also to protect the health of every young Ontarian, because at the end of the day, the future of this province depends on the health of our young people and a message about the danger of smoking.

I'm very pleased that the members opposite are supporting Bill 131.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He always does a great job of bringing forward the issues from his community—and, in this case, a personal perspective, losing his father. Many of us in this House have talked today about the loss that we have each suffered, or have all suffered collectively. We all have to think about that human cost and the impact to all of our lives from that whole humanistic perspective, and also the financial reality.

We were talking here a little bit ago about the fires that are created as a result of careless smokers, and those types of things; the firefighters' lives that have been lost over the years. The health care costs that we continually incur as a result of trying to treat those people who have inflicted themselves—I find it just absolutely asinine that someone would actually inhale that smoke that they know at some point is probably going to kill them, and I try my darnedest to try not to do that.

I implore the kids watching today, the youth of our world, to be cool and not smoke. It's a lot of peer pressure sometimes to jump on. I think it takes a lot more strength—it takes a lot more willpower—but you'll come out the other end a stronger person for it, and you'll be a leader in your community, which will actually help.

I'm going to put a shout out to Hazel Lynn, our medical officer of health. Jim mentioned medical officers of health. She's done a great job in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound of trying to lead the anti-smoking mission in our area, and it's absolutely critical.

I think we should be focusing on the prevention. We should be finding ways to ensure that young kids understand why it's detrimental to their health and to the health of those around them, and what the future of our province, our country and our world is going to be if we can get smoking right out of there.

My colleague brought up a lot of things: illegal to possess, illegal to sell to youth—absolutely critical—and the addiction. A number of my colleagues have spoken about contraband. It's absolutely abhorrent that we actually allow this to continue in today's world. The damage that illegal contraband smoking causes to our province, across the spectrum, is absolutely unacceptable.

We need to stomp it out. We need to butt it out. At the end of the day, I will be supporting this bill whole-heartedly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I listened quite intently to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry's statement, and I can relate to a lot of his personal experiences, particularly with his father. I think I spoke about mine earlier today.

With the information that is available today—it's something that wasn't there a long time ago. I remember as a young boy, seven or eight years old, sitting in the back of Dad's old LTD station wagon, looking at that blue smoke coming from the windows at the front and back. Jeez, we didn't even have seat belts. We were going in the bush, into camp, and it was the greatest good time that we had.

Could you imagine seeing that today? My goodness. That wouldn't even happen anywhere on the streets today. You just wouldn't even hear about it. Never mind not having that blue smoke coming at you in the back and pretending you're smoking with Dad, but not having a seat belt and whistling in the back of the car.

There's so much information out there that we can provide to our youth, to the public, that the decision should be an easy one, but it never is. Again, I used to be a smoker myself, for 19 years, and it was one heck of an experience to kick that habit. I'm thankful every day that both my wife and I made that decision.

The one thing in these comments that I'm going to stress right now, basically coming from the perspective of a father of two boys, is that I strongly disagree with the fact that we should be permitting areas around the schools with any type of tobacco product, let alone a lighter. Jeez. We can't even get on a plane these days with a lighter.

Kids don't need that in school. They don't need that environment whatsoever. I don't even want to see it come close to coming into our schools. If it's there, it gives the perception that the kids can do it. If you give them a location, you're actually condoning it, so I don't want to see it there. That is strictly a comment coming from me as a father of two boys. That is definitely something I do not want to see anywhere near our schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round.

I return to the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Scarborough–Agincourt, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who always has something to add, and Algoma–Manitoulin.

I think the issue of the panic attacks and mental health—I think that's true: We're seeing a lot more health issues than we ever dreamed of not too many years ago. We need to make people aware of that.

We talk about the issue of fires: How many house fires, forest fires, the amount of damage, the number of lives lost, and it came back to smoking? It's something I think everybody has talked about and wants to put in the past, but it's a tough one.

We talked about the age of 25, that if we can get them to that age, they likely aren't going to smoke. Still, 19%

is a large percentage of the population still smoking. It's hard to believe it's still that way.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin talked about the old cars. I remember being packed into a car, 10 of us, no seat belts. The smoke you were getting was usually the dust coming through the floor. For many trips—usually it was just church and back and that was it. But those are the days we came from, and those were the days when smoking was not an issue. It was not known to be an issue, other than the cost.

We know a lot more today. We know it comes down to keeping people under 25, especially those under 19, from smoking, and not letting them start. As the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said, it's got to be the uncool thing, to smoke. We're getting there, but we're not there yet.

One thing I think we need to do is stop that smoking area for kids. I really wonder—if you were to have a drink of alcohol or a beer in your pocket, it's a \$100 fine. I don't know why it's not the same thing for smoking. I think that's what it takes.

Interjection: Good idea. Private member's bill.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes.

Thanks for the opportunity today, and I look forward to some change—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It is my pleasure to have an opportunity to comment this afternoon for a few minutes about Bill 131, which is An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I listened to a number of the speeches this afternoon, starting out with the speech from the NDP critic and member from Nickel Belt. I heard most of her hour-long speech on this bill, and I thought she certainly made a lot of good points. She started off by pointing out how this bill was introduced in November, and I think there was about an hour of debate maybe in December. but now it has been some four and a half months that the bill hasn't been debated, so, in fact, as she pointed out, the NDP lead was just today, and we haven't had the official opposition's lead on this yet. It seems a little strange that it has been so long since the bill was introduced if it was a priority of the government, but it's been four and a half months just sitting there with no discussion.

This bill is intended to do a few things.

"Assorted amendments are made to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Among them:

"1. The sale of promotional items together with tobacco products is prohibited." I assume that means giveaways that would go with tobacco products to encourage their use would be prohibited.

"2. The sale of flavoured tobacco products is prohibited, subject to a power to prescribe exemptions." I'll talk a little bit further about that when I get an opportunity, the various flavoured tobacco products that are available nowadays.

"3. The list of places that an inspector is specifically empowered to enter is broadened.

"4. Adjustments are made to the penalty provisions.

"5. The power to prescribe places for the purposes of the act is amended to provide for exemptions."

So that is, broadly stated, what this bill is about.

Mr. Speaker, as was noted by the member from Leeds–Grenville, I note that the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association has some concerns about what this would do for their businesses, particularly with patios. I gather that right now, with the current situation under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, bar and restaurant owners can choose whether they have a smoke-free patio or not. I would simply say that it's important that they are heard in the process of this bill moving through its legislative process, so that when this bill goes to committee they be given an opportunity to make their case, as it may be.

## 1740

We've heard personal stories from people here about how smoking has affected their family. We heard the member from Algoma–Manitoulin talking at length about how many members of his family have suffered from cancer and passed away from cancer. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry talked about that.

I have to say I've been fortunate in that most members of my own family do not smoke currently. I don't think any members of my immediate family do now, with the exception of my one brother, Ross, who at a young age decided he wanted to be a farmer and started farming. It turned out that the farmer that he learned how to be a farmer with, Leonard Fitzmaurice, had smoked all his life and smoked roll-up Export 'A's: no filters or anything else. So my brother, and I don't know how old he wasprobably about 19 or 20-was learning how to be a farmer with Leonard, and the next minute, my brother's smoking roll-up Export 'A's. He smoked those for many, many years and tried many, many times to quit. I understand how difficult it is to quit smoking. I think when you have friends or relatives who have tried to quit, you realize it's probably one of the most difficult addictions to quit. He eventually did, so congratulations to him, but it was at a young age that he got hooked on smoking.

Really, I think that's what this bill is about, in particular with the flavoured products: trying to stop young people from getting involved in smoking.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to be able to use props that are related to this bill in my presentation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka is seeking unanimous consent of the House to use props related to this debate. Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now I won't have to get the Sergeant-at-Arms to come and take things from me.

I had a meeting with the Heart and Stroke organization related to this bill, and they were pointing out how the flavoured products now are made to appeal to young people and really get them hooked on nicotine. They sent to, I think, all the members what I have before me, which is a Fruit Roll-Up on my right hand and a Strawberry Fields cigar on the other side. You can see from the packaging that they look quite similar, and are obviously meant to; the cigar looks very much like candy.

I haven't tried one of these flavoured products, but I gather, in listening to the speeches this afternoon—the member from Leeds—Grenville talked about how he went to a local convenience store and had them lift up the wall. He named off banana and every flavour you could possibly imagine behind that wall. Obviously, I think, those flavours are intended to get young people to like smoking and then have them hooked on it. From there, they have a very difficult time and perhaps a lifetime habit which is very difficult to break. Obviously, I think dealing with that makes sense.

We⁵ve heard from other speakers about the negative effects of smoking. I just want to talk about some of those negative effects. We heard the member from Nickel Belt, in her hour-long speech, talk about the fact that three million people a year will die from lung cancer worldwide, but I think the one number she used that hit home for me was that 36 people a day die in Ontario. I thought this number was rather high. It surprised me, really, that 20% of the population of Ontario smokes. I didn't realize it was still that high, because over the past number of years, we have seen things change. You watch a movie or TV program like Mad Men, which I've only done about once, but pretty much everyone is smoking.

We've heard speakers this afternoon talk about how nurses and doctors used to smoke in hospitals, and even in patients' rooms they smoked. Times have changed since then. The rules—I guess you would call them the pressures of society, the social norms-have changed over the last 30 years so that people do wear seat belts in cars now, and people are pretty careful about drinking and driving, the great majority of the population. Whereas smoking used to be something that was very socially acceptable, nowadays, you have to be pretty determined to be a smoker. You see people outside in the middle of winter, and it's minus 20, and they're out freezing, very cold, smoking a cigarette. That doesn't look like a lot of fun to me; that's for sure. We have changed the social norms, and I think that's good. But it only goes so far.

Mr. Speaker, I'll use my second prop, and that is a baggy of—this isn't actually cigarettes. It was also sent out. It's what a bag of illegal or contraband cigarettes looks like. The unfortunate part is, they're pretty common in Ontario. In fact, I think Ontario has more contraband or illegal cigarettes sold than any other province. There have been a few studies looking at that. The Ontario Convenience Stores Association did a contraband tobacco study.

"Between October 4th, 2013, and November 10th, 2013, NIRIC"—I'm not quite sure what that is—"anonymously collected cigarette samples at 136 previously identified (observed) smoking locations around specific sites like hospitals, office buildings, high schools and

other public locations. In total, 18,275 samples were collected in the province, and while the results are not scientific, they are an important indicator of illegal tobacco presence and usage in Ontario.

"The study found a large fluctuation in contraband rates across the province, noting a provincial average of 21% (one in five)"—which is amazing to me. "The prevalence of contraband products is highest in southern Ontario and in the GTA."

I think that's pretty shocking. This was essentially a butt survey, where they picked up butts and identified whether they had been bought properly, legally, or not. They found that the worst-case scenarios were:

- —at the Rideau Carleton racetrack in Ottawa, 46.6%;
- —outside of Hôtel-Dieu Grace hospital in Windsor, 46.2%:
  - —at the Western Fair racetrack in London, 45.9%;
  - —at the Oshawa Centre in Oshawa, 42%;
  - —at Casino Rama in Orillia, 42%;
  - —at Sudbury Downs racetrack in Sudbury, 41%;
  - —at Fallsview Casino in Niagara Falls, 40%;
  - —at the Brampton GO train station in Peel, 40%;
- —at Eastwood Collegiate Institute in Kitchener-Cambridge, 40.6%; and
  - —at Royal Victoria hospital in Barrie, 40.5%.

To me, those are pretty shocking numbers, and I think it's important because we have tightened up the rules significantly in Ontario to the point where, from my perspective as a non-smoker, it seems to me you have to be pretty determined to want to smoke. And it's expensive to smoke, too. Cigarettes are expensive. Well, the contraband cigarettes are much cheaper.

As well, they're sold outside of the usual safeguards of checking for ID and that kind of thing. They're basically unregulated. It would seem to me that many more young people are going to have access to contraband cigarettes than they are to cigarettes bought at your local store or wherever. I know that convenience stores have significant programs where they ID and health units inspect places that sell cigarettes. They even do things like send in underage people and try to get them to buy cigarettes. None of that happens where contraband cigarettes are purchased.

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It just seems to me that no matter what legislation is passed here, we're missing a huge part of the consumption of cigarettes and other tobacco products with the rules, if contraband cigarettes are not dealt with.

I have some information from the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association pre-budget presentation—probably to the finance committee, I suspect—and they illustrate the costs of contraband. They point out that there's a large criminal involvement with it as well. "As of 2011, the RCMP identified over 175 organized crime groups involved in the contraband cigarette trade.

"The Canadian Medical Association Journal reported ... that 22% of youth smokers consume contraband and smoke more than their peers...."

The "CTF study"—I assume that's the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—"(Dec 2012) estimated \$742 million to \$1.2 billion" is "lost annually to both federal and provincial governments in lost tax revenue."

So not only is there organized crime, where you have no controls on who is actually buying the cigarettes, but there's a huge loss for government as well, and measures like putting up the price of cigarettes probably, if anything, encourage more contraband sales. You can do all you want passing new rules, but if there's this huge segment of the market that's contraband, then the rules don't apply to them. Obviously for the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association, which has many, many convenience stores, they are concerned about their business and it's really not fair to them.

"In 2009, one out of 10 convenience stores closed in Canada due to profits lost from contraband tobacco."

As much as we don't want people to smoke, there's still a significant number of people who do smoke. If they're buying their cigarettes at a convenience store, first of all, youth won't be buying them because they do check ID. Secondly, taxes will be paid so that if all the cigarettes that are sold are legal, then we'd be getting that \$1 billion in additional tax revenues that could be then used for health programs etc.

There is a huge cost to smoking in Ontario. I heard the member from Nickel Belt say that the annual cost of smoking in Ontario is some \$1.6 billion a year. That's a huge number. Also, the productivity loss is some \$4.4 billion a year, and there are some 500,000 hospital days that are used in the province of Ontario. So those are huge numbers.

Again, continuing on the contraband idea, some of the reasons why people are involved—I mean there's just a huge illicit profit available. This FrontLine Security magazine—"Contraband Activity: Can It Be Stopped?"—I don't see the actual date of it on here, but this magazine points out that "one carton (200 cigarettes) potential tax revenue loss, \$65 a carton; potential illicit gain, \$35 a carton." Then you go all the way up to a tractor-trailer—"a tractor-trailer (1,400 master cases) potential tax revenue loss:"\$4.5 million; "potential illicit gain value:"\$2.4 million. Obviously that's why there's such an incentive to be involved in this business. "It costs approximately \$5 to produce 200 cigarettes, with a selling price of about \$40 a carton."

They go on in the magazine talking about "Targeting Young People," which I think is key. They point out that, "Canadian regulations, such as requiring photo ID for purchasing cigarettes from retailers, banning cigarette ads, and hiding tobacco from view in stores, are all intended to prevent young people from getting access to tobacco. But these are undermined by the ready availability of low-cost contraband tobacco. A 'baggie' of 200 contraband cigarettes can cost as much as \$70 or \$80 less than legal product—and contraband dealers don't check ID. Low price and easy availability have made contraband tobacco a prime source for youth smoking. A recent study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

(CAMH) in Toronto found that where teen smoking rates had been on the decline, that was no longer the case. In fact, the CAMH has identified contraband tobacco as a reason for Ontario's stubbornly high youth smoking rate. 'Young people are smoking contraband cigarettes, and they are smoking more of them.'"

I think that's a very important point. All these legislative changes and many other changes have been made the last number of years, but the smoking rate, particularly for young people, is stuck at one point. It's not going down anymore. In fact, I think we heard from speakers earlier on that it was the 20- to 24-year-olds that were one of the higher groups of smoking. So, obviously, dealing with issues like the flavoured products, which are meant to be attractive to young people, dealing with contraband accessibility, availability, which is where it would be easier for young people to acquire various tobacco products, whether it's flavoured cigarillos, whether it's regular cigarettes—these have to be dealt with or we're not dealing with the whole issue.

So you can make all the regulations and rules you want, but if you're not dealing with contraband, you simply won't be dealing with the problem. I think that's an area that hopefully, when this bill goes to committee—perhaps it will be an opportunity for the government or the opposition parties to amend this to deal with some of these other issues that I think are important to really have success in dealing with lowering smoking rates in the province. I think that's something that we all want to see for everyone in the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his contributions to the debate today. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo alluded to the fact that we hope that this bill—the debate is great. We love to hear debate on bills. We encourage—I feel it's every member's privilege and right to stand up and contribute to the debate, and I'd like to hear more of it. That's certainly not the issue that I have. But I hope when this does come full circle and we can move it forward, that it will get to committee and it will get the work that it needs done in committee and then be brought back to the House so that we can have third reading and hopefully get this looked after if and when and should an election be called. I'm encouraged by the fact that we have this bill here today and we're talking about it, but I hope that we can see the future in it so that it actually comes to be and we do protect our children against smoking addictions. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** First of all, I want to congratulate the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his very eloquent speech. He is certainly a highly honourable member of this assembly that I always enjoy listening to, particularly when he talked about his own family experiences.

I had a brother who died of lung cancer. He smoked for most of his life, except for the last 10 or 15 years, and then they discovered a lump on his chest and he was unfortunately gone about six or seven months after that—my brother, Peter. He was one of the most positive people that I've ever met in my life. He was never down about anything, particularly during the last six months of his life. I know that members of my own family and many of the people that he knew were highly impressed with the way he always carried himself.

I, too, was a smoker, back until my son, who's now the mayor of Kingston, turned one on June 5, 1976. Before that, I used to smoke two packs a day. I used to smoke those wine-tipped cigarillos as well. They're even worse than cigarettes because after a while you could smell wine coming out of every pore in your body.

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I think that whatever we can do to stop people, especially young people, from smoking, is a good thing. I hope the pages are listening to this. No matter what your friends or anybody tells you, do not start smoking. It is bad for you in every way, shape and form.

Particularly a bill like this, which is basically all about banning making smoking even more attractive than it used to be, with the kind of cigarettes that they used to talk about—because now we're talking about flavoured cigarettes that don't even taste like tobacco initially.

Don't smoke. Pass this bill as soon as possible. I think everybody, particularly our children, will thank us for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Whatever.

Mr. Bill Walker: Government services? Sorry, no. What's your new title?

Interjection: Chair of cabinet.

Mr. Bill Walker: Chair of cabinet. Sorry. My apologies. I still want to call you the AG, and you were sitting in your old chair today, so it threw me off. I always find my colleague Norm Miller brings a balanced viewpoint, regardless of the topic he speaks about. I think that what he was bringing out today was a lot of what has already been said. A lot of our families have lost people. Again, I've lost my sister, and I have another sister who's a survivor, thank goodness. My mom had breast cancer and has now passed; I'm not certain that that was from smoking. But my dad was a heavy smoker and so was the rest of my family, so I can only attribute it back.

I've spoken to a number of the pages now who have sat in here and intently listened. To a page that I've talked to, they've all said, "We hear what you're saying, and we're not going to." So if nothing else today, I think we've had some impact on at least some of our youth.

The cost to our society of this horrific habit—it is an addiction; it's a terrible thing. Not only the cost to us economically, to our health care system, to those people who don't get the care and services that they're duly entitled to because we spend so much money treating

people who, in my mind, have virtually created their own health challenges—it just boggles my mind when I see young people, particularly, smoking, when they know and when they've seen.

I shared today that when I watched my sister's life drain out of her body at 43 years of age—there's nothing that will ever take that horrific sight out of my mind. If I could put that in front of every child that I know, I think it would have a huge impact and no one would ever smoke again. That was most devastating, watching a vibrant, full-of-life, caring, loving person dwindle away.

I implore everyone out there: Be a good role model. Talk people out of smoking. Make sure your kids don't smoke. At the end of the day, those people who are trying to influence negatively, give it a sober second thought and stop what you're doing. Smoking is not good for any

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to what the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka had to say. I thank him and I thank everyone today who has talked about family members and people who have literally wasted away before their eyes as a result of years of inhaling cigarette smoke.

One of the saddest things that we have seen in this Legislature—I'm going back a few years—was a woman who never smoked at all but worked in a cafe where she literally breathed in second-hand smoke her entire working life. To watch her on the television as the months went by and to see her lying there in the bed suffering so miserably from cancer, having herself never actually smoked but just having been around those who did, spoke volumes.

I'd also like to spend my last minute talking about the wonderful use of props, for which my friend sought and got unanimous consent. I think this is the first time in my 13 years that I have ever witnessed unanimous consent in this Legislature for the use of props. It was a good use, because if anyone is watching this on television—perhaps the members here all got the same package. I know that I got the same package and never thought to bring them up here and use them in debate, but kudos to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who did. For people watching on television to actually know what these baggies look like and to actually know what the cigarettes or cigarillos that are candy-flavoured look like and look at the packaging of them, I think that is a very useful tool.

Perhaps in the future the members of this Legislature will not be so cavalier as to disallow the use of props, because this is one example of where it actually works and is effective. Kudos to the member for asking for consent, and to all the members here for giving it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to reply if he chooses to do so.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I see we're past due in terms of time, so I'll just thank the member from London–Fanshawe, the chair of cabinet, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Beaches–East York for their comments and, in particular, their personal stories about how members of their families have been affected by smoking.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1805.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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	Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London-Fanshawe	
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough	
Berardmetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)		House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti
	James	reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora-Rainy River	Boaroniem
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
		Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Game / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)		Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and	
Timer, Randy (1 C)	Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Horwani, rainica (1901)	Transition Control Transition-Control	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et de Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	1
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa -Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale
, ,		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland -Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernemen
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et d l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Timore of Finance / Timore des Finances
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergovernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	25.1.
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Willowdale Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

# STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

# Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak

Laura Albanese, Steve Clark Mike Colle, Joe Dickson Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette

Michael Prue

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

# Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn

Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue

Soo Wong

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

# Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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No. 121

Nº 121

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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 1 April 2014

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 1er avril 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière Deborah Deller

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 April 2014

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1er avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

# ORDERS OF THE DAY

# TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon. John Milloy:** I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House related to Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system.

The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly shall meet on April 2, 2014, from 12:15 p.m. until 6 p.m. and on April 3, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122; and, in the event that clause-by-clause consideration is not complete by that time, during regularly scheduled meetings thereafter until completion of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That only those amendments which have been filed with the Clerk of the Committee by the time of adjournment of the committee's meeting on Wednesday, March 24, 2014, shall be considered by the committee; and

That on April 2, 2014, at not later than 12:15 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

Upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith; and

When the order for third reading of Bill 122 is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further amendment; and

The vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minntes The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has moved notice of motion number 43.

Mr. Milloy.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I think this is a very straightforward motion that we've put forward here today. It concerns Bill 122, a very important bill and a very timesensitive bill that concerns bargaining in the education sector.

Just to outline what this somewhat complicated-sounding motion does—it's very straightforward—it sets out a timetable for committee hearings to finish up on this bill, and, should the committee decide to pass it forward to third reading, a way in which it should be dealt with by this Legislature in an expedient manner, and, again, should the Legislature see fit to pass it, to make sure that it is put to a vote.

Just to give you a little bit of history, Mr. Speaker, very briefly as to why we have come to this moment when we're introducing a motion to create this timetable, I'll give you some of the statistics of how much debate we have had on this bill thus far. It saw a significant period of debate in the House at second reading: 32 members, according to our count, spoke to this bill, and 59 members participated in debate through questions and comments. It was debated for 14 hours over nine days. It passed second reading on December 2, 2013, only after the government moved closure on the debate due to stalling tactics by-and I'm going to name the Progressive Conservatives. We referred the bill to the standing committee on legislative affairs for further scrutiny, where again we have unfortunately seen the official opposition not wishing to engage in debate in the usual back and forth on these matters, but instead to filibuster and to delay. It's clear that the official opposition has no interest in participating constructively. I'll give you one example: We're on clause-by-clause consideration; we have done six hours of consideration, and only three sections of the bill have been dealt with by the committee.

It's unfortunate that the official opposition continues to obstruct constructive progress of this bill. That's why we have brought forward this time allocation motion.

I think members across the way in the Progressive Conservative Party will be very familiar with time allocation. When they were last in government, they time-allocated about 60% of their legislation. In fact, Madam Speaker, I remember I had the pleasure—I have great respect for, Mr. John Baird, who was a member of this Legislature and a former House leader when the Conservatives were in government. I remember once, in a

casual conversation, he bragged to me that the standard operating procedure of the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government was to time-allocate legislation. So it's something they're very familiar with.

This is a very straightforward item that we're putting forward here today. We look forward to the debate and discussion, but let's get on with some consideration of Bill 122 in a meaningful way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: Madam Speaker, everything the House leader just said was complete nonsense. We have been debating this very important piece of legislation, Bill 122—let me just remind the House leader that, in the course of second reading debate, a time allocation motion was put forth, silencing the opposition. He is now choosing to invoke the same clause in a similar tactic by limiting debate in committee. We in the committee sought to expand public hearings to listen to more stakeholders.

The funny thing is that the government likes to talk about partners in education. They like to talk about the teaching federations and the school boards. But they always, always, always neglect one very important partner in our education system, and that is our parents and their kids. The woeful neglect of simply trying to understand some of the concerns that they have with collective bargaining has certainly been the result of what the government House leader suggests are stall tactics, when really all we're trying to do is to listen to the people who sent us here. The government simply doesn't want to do that.

So now they're going to time-allocate us in committee, and not only are they going to time-allocate us in committee, but they're going to allow third reading debate to last for no more than one hour. That means every caucus only has, on one of the most vital pieces of legislation in education that we've seen in the province of Ontario in years—one hour of debate at third reading, 20 minutes per party.

I'm not sure if the government has been reading the newspapers lately. The very fact that it seeks to go to extraordinary lengths to silence the opposition has certainly called their ability to govern into question. They're doing it here on important pieces of legislation. They're trying to silence the opposition when it comes to asking some very important questions about politically motivated decisions to cancel power plants. At every turn, the government seeks to silence the opposition, silence the critics. They don't even want to hear from us.

Madam Speaker, I am very disheartened that on this particular piece of legislation we aren't able to solicit ideas from the very people who elected us. As the official opposition, we have an obligation to represent their concerns.

# 0910

I've written a couple of letters to the Minister of Education outlining specifically what we were looking for with this particular piece of legislation.

We started that process by looking at, examining and exploring whether we can modify or even repeal regulation 274, which talks about the hiring process of our teachers when there are vacancies in our schools.

Parents right across the province of Ontario have expressed concern about the hiring practices in our schools. They've told us that this process takes too long to actually complete and find a teacher. They have become upset when there has been a teacher who might have been on a temporary assignment, who the students love, who participates in a vibrant school environment, and that person, because of their lack of seniority, isn't able to fill that position.

Parents are talking to us about that, and they wanted us to raise that concern, so we took the opportunity to invite the government to see if we can come to some agreement. It didn't necessarily need to be in this particular piece of legislation. It could have been an agreement where we incorporated another item, so that we could ensure that the best teachers are in front of our classrooms. That's one thing that we had spent a lot of time talking about on this side of the House. We put a private member's bill forward, and that wasn't acceptable to the government, so we invited the government to come up with something else. We have our own ideas. They have their ideas as well

There is wide recognition that there is a problem with the hiring process in our schools and with regulation 274, not just from parents but even from teachers and especially principals. I might add that principals are obviously a partner in our education system, and their number one priority is to get rid of or modify regulation 274.

Yet we didn't hear anything. The government didn't invite us to negotiate. It's a very funny thing that on a bill, on a piece of legislation that is supposed to outline how negotiation is to take place in the province of Ontario, we actually had no negotiation whatsoever. Given that, we wrote another letter, acknowledging that the government did not want to move on regulation 274.

But through the course of public hearings, we did hear from one deputant, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, that there was a modification that they sought, to incorporate the withdrawal of co-instructional activities into the definition of a strike, which exists in this piece of legislation. That is exactly what they have looked at; that's what they came to the table to talk about.

Listening to that concern, we wrote another letter to the Minister of Education, stating that we will take off the table our request for modification of regulation 274 and put on the table the protection of extracurricular activities in our schools.

Throughout the course of the government's last round of negotiations, which took place last spring, about a year ago—and certainly people will question whether negotiations actually did take place, but we'll leave it at that—there was a withdrawal of extracurricular activities in some of our schools in the province of Ontario. Some of our schools participated in extracurricular activities; some of our schools did not.

There was a request from two teaching federations to withdraw the services and voluntary services of coinstructional activities in our schools. It meant the cancellation of football, basketball, volleyball, soccer, curling and other sports. It meant the withdrawal of activities that involved debate clubs, drama clubs, music, choir—these kinds of things that enrich the educational experience of our students.

Parents are rightfully concerned that whenever we talk about another round of negotiation—we are about to enter a negotiation season—once again we'll be faced in the fall with the prospect of losing out on the very activities many students love.

A lot of parents have come to me to talk about the fact that come September, when their child is in their last year—a year that's so critical for the prospect of getting athletic scholarships in schools across North America—they're worried about losing that one season that's going to make the difference between getting into a school they want or not.

Nobody other than the PC caucus is standing up for those parents, is standing up for those kids. It's our obligation as legislators to effectively represent their concerns. Yet we put that on the table, Madam Speaker, and what we heard back was silence, no interest, that the only people worthy of talking to in this process of teacher negotiation and Bill 122 were the teacher federations and the school boards. The concerns of parents right across this province were simply neglected to be heard.

I vowed to those very parents that I would use every means possible to raise their issues, to talk about the things that matter to their kids. I vowed to those students, who care so much about those experiences-often those kinds of experiences that we remember far beyond our time in our schools-that I would use every tool necessary to raise their concerns. Because that's my job; I'm a member of this Legislature who represents constituents in my riding. I'm also the official opposition critic for education. Parents across this province would come to us and say, "Keep up the fight. Do this because our kids need to have some certainty about whether those activities are going to continue." I would suggest that in this process, where we've actually heard complete silence on this very issue, it is so disheartening to me as a legislator, but also to parents and families right across this province.

We asked for something on behalf of one of the people who came to us through the course of public hearings, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. We listened to stakeholders who wanted to talk about how we can maintain an enriched educational experience for our students. Most of those stakeholders weren't even allowed to participate in the public hearing process. The reason for that was because we were only allowed to have 12 deputations, for three hours, on a bill that is so fundamental to the process that we have. So I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that we are looking for some assurance from the government that simply is not available to us. I want to say, on behalf of those parents, on behalf of those students, that we will do whatever we can to bring this issue forward.

Twelve deputants and three hours of debate on a very important piece of legislation is an insult to this Legisla-

ture and it's an insult to the families who care about education. We should have opened this up far more than what has happened. The fact that we've been constrained in our ability to examine this legislation is the very reason why we oppose this time allocation motion. Twelve deputants got an opportunity to speak for five minutes, and most of those deputants didn't even have enough time to complete the presentation that they came to committee armed with. On the flip side, we were able to have a rotation of questions that lasted, per caucus, three minutes each. I know through the course of question period, we get four minutes to pose two questions to the government and have that response. On this very thoughtful piece of legislation that has so many implications for collective bargaining in the province of Ontario, the deputants had five minutes, and each party had three minutes to ask questions—not enough.

0920

I noticed the government House leader talked about how the Mike Harris years implemented these sorts of things. Let me tell you that on certain pieces of legislation, when we talked about education and we had deputations, we actually allocated 30 minutes per deputation in committee: 30 minutes, double what this government has suggested. You know what? Gerard Kennedy—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: — was in that committee suggesting that those committee hearings were a sham, that not enough public hearings were actually incorporated in the process of listening to people's concerns, that it was a sham.

I notice the Minister of Education was heckling me there. She had an opportunity to actually participate in some of those deputations where, as the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, she was allowed to stake 30 minutes to make a deputation on Bill 74, way back in the day of our government.

The time allocation motion that is brought forward has completely shut down debate on a very important piece of legislation. This is something that I would suggest: that we actually have to encourage more discussion rather than less. I know they are going to heckle me, because all I'm asking for is some more time to talk about this. But they don't want to hear that, because they want to ram through this piece of legislation.

I want to raise the issue about what exactly we are talking about, because it's very important to have the government really understand that there was an easier way to do this. There was an easier way to actually get this bill past committee in a fashion that would have produced a win-win for us. It would have produced a win for the government, because they got a bill they would have been able to present to their partners, and I would have been able to include, in those partners, parents and students who would have been guaranteed—or at least had more guarantees—that extracurricular activities would have been present in their schools come the fall. We could have come to an agreement.

What we were asking for wasn't radical; it wasn't over the top. What we were asking for is to simply put in writing a guarantee for parents that appears in a ruling by the Ontario Labour Relations Board from the Trillium Lakelands District School Board and Upper Canada District School Board v. the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. This labour relations board ruling came to us last year. I read that labour relations board ruling, and it's a very interesting ruling. All that we are simply doing is making clear in legislation what that ruling actually states. So what we are asking for wasn't a radical deviation from what was already decided by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. This ruling came out on April 11, 2013.

What are some of the concerns that this relates to? The minister wants to be reminded of this. Two school boards took the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to talk about the removal of what the teachers' federation calls voluntary services in our schools. That's what they were seeking to do. The position of the school boards was that this was an illegal withdrawal of services. So they brought the matter to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. It was very interesting, throughout the course of reading the decision, all the manoeuvres that were put in place to try and avoid an actual ruling on certain matters. And, indeed, this is now an interim decision because there is a charter challenge of whether engaging in these discussions is actually part of a free assembly and the right to political protest. I'll leave, obviously, that matter for a future decision to be

But what's interesting is some of the things that were said in the course of this ruling. It's extremely difficult, as the Ontario Labour Relations Board suggested, to determine what exactly constitutes a voluntary activity, because that is always a concern. Every time we raise it, they say, "You know you're trying to make mandatory what's voluntary." That's not the case. We're just simply following what we've studied and read, and I hope the government has done the same thing, with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

"[O]n a principled or logical basis," the decision reads, "I see no difference for 'a voluntary activities' exception per se from the definition of strike—and in particular in the education sector. The line between mandatory and voluntary duties would not be a bright line test...." It's too difficult to distinguish between what is a mandatory and what is a voluntary activity and whether that constitutes an ability to withdraw such services.

"ETFO argues that the applicants' collective agreements here explicitly make these duties (or some of them) voluntary—so these cases do not apply." Again, we have to understand that the Ontario Labour Relations Board says that it's too difficult to define what is voluntary and what is mandatory, and you can't simply withdraw what you think are voluntary services. You just can't do that. So our amendment that we proposed in this piece of legislation simply reflects what the Ontario Labour Relations Board was suggesting.

Some reasons why the defining of a "voluntary activity" would be problematic if these "voluntary activities"

were not included in the definition of a strike: Trying to define the line would end up being left "frequently to be determined in always expedited unlawful strike applications with their concomitant pressures and urgency, which is not the best context for any thoughtful or deliberate analysis of the difference....

"The point is that ..." it goes on to say, "interpreting the definition of strike not to cover voluntary activities invites (if not virtually guarantees) future disputes and future uncertainty, as parties for their own tactical advantage at the relevant time attempt to characterize duties as voluntary or mandatory." Again, "as parties for their own tactical advantage at the relevant time attempt to characterize duties as voluntary or mandatory," was part of this decision.

The ETFO goes on to suggest that "there is no evidence of any quagmire of litigation—there have only been a handful of cases..." But, "it is less clear," it goes on to say, "what one should make of that fact for present purposes, because it is reasonable to infer that one of the reasons why such work stoppages have been uncommon is that, by and large they are apt to be, and are known to be, illegal."

Finally, even if voluntary activities were easy to define, they should still be included in the definition of a strike, and there are some reasons this Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling had stated: "Almost any contract of service or collective agreement which envisages service, especially in a professional enterprise, can be frustrated by insistence on "work to rule" if it be the case that nothing that has not been expressed can be asked of the employee." The focus is "solely on the impact of the activities in combination or in concert—and here no one disputed the impact or that the withdrawal was intended to have an impact....

"[C]ertainly some teacher functions will surely be done outside of school hours..." So "to conclude that a refusal in concert to perform voluntary activities is not a strike simply because they are unpaid, seems to me to achieve indirectly what cannot be achieved directly—i.e. strike action."

# 0930

So, Madam Speaker, what we have suggested in our deliberation of Bill 122 was simply codifying in legislation some of the elements that were actually present in the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling, and the rationale provided for doing so is simply to provide some greater clarity. It provides greater clarity for us when we're deliberating over a particular piece of legislation; it provides greater clarity for parents, who are obviously concerned about the withdrawal of extracurricular activities as a voluntary activity in our schools; and it provides some greater clarity to teachers on whether or not these constitute a strike action if you're withdrawing, en masse, co-instructional activities.

I do want to state with a degree of force that "coinstructional activities" is a broad definition. In our amendment that we've put forth on this particular piece of legislation, we stated what those items include. People want assurance that their sports are going to take place. People want assurance that their music programs are going to be enriched. People want assurance that their creative activities are going to find a place in our schools. People want assurance that groups and clubs of activities, whether it's for anti-bullying or for another matter, have a person in charge, responsible for putting those ideas and putting those clubs into action. They don't exist without presence of a teacher. So even on things as important as anti-bullying, we are potentially facing the lack of supervision by a teacher because a teacher federation determines that these are voluntary, when they are a part of the educational experience of students. We're concerned about that.

We have great teachers in the province of Ontario, and a lot of the teachers in the province of Ontario provide extra instruction beyond what takes place in an instructional day. They have math clubs and reading clubs that are a part of helping students achieve better. We're now in the process of potentially leaving in limbo those very activities because the government chose not to act. It chose not to follow the interpretation of the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling I have just cited that clearly states—clearly states—that the voluntary withdrawal of services of what constitute voluntary activities, because you can't distinguish between what a voluntary activity is and what a mandatory activity is.

Imagine if we were to do that in the course of our work as MPPs—to try and determine what is, in fact, a mandatory function and what might be a voluntary function. Is going to Legion halls on Friday nights a voluntary activity, responding to e-mails from our constituents, making those phone calls, or attending events at all times of the day? They might be considered voluntary activities, but you know what, Madam Speaker? It's part of our job; it is what we do.

Every job has, of course, activities that they do on an ongoing basis. When I was a professor prior to coming into politics, around January and February was reference letter season. I never got paid for writing reference letters for my students, but I wanted them to get the education that they wanted. I helped them as much as I could, like our educators do in our schools each and every day.

So what we're suggesting here is simply following the guidance that was provided by a labour relations board ruling that has listed and provided some detail about how we govern future labour relations when it comes to the withdrawal of voluntary activities—what constitutes "voluntary activities"—from our schools.

What I'm trying to suggest here, and I've gone on about this at some length, is that there could have been a far easier solution to getting Bill 122 to the place I know the minister wants to have it. Frankly, I want to have it there, too. The easy way would have been to say, "What you're saying, Progressive Conservatives, is simply puting and clarifying in legislation what already has been ruled upon by the Ontario Labour Relations Board." But instead of doing that, they're going through and taking

and utilizing draconian measures to silence the opposition, who are raising an extremely valid point when it comes to the provision of our extracurricular activities.

The simple way would have been to pick up the phone, would have been to talk to the opposition, would have been to negotiate. I've said this time and again: If you didn't like the amendment that I was putting forward, but you had a different amendment that would have achieved a similar goal, hey, put that on the table. I'm happy to listen to those kinds of arguments. But to ignore, to ridicule, to shut down debate on this particular piece of legislation, I think, does a disservice to parents and students right across this province.

I think we are at a very interesting point in our deliberations, that the lack of interest by the government to even entertain and codify something that already exists in the Ontario Labour Relations Board says more about the government than anything else. It says that they are willing to do whatever it takes, perhaps, to not give the opposition any credit when it comes to education, when it comes to something so vital to the way in which our children learn in our schools.

What possible reason could there be for just simply ignoring and flat out rejecting a simple request to add to the definition of "strike" co-instructional activities? What possible reason could there be to do that? Time and again, I'm asking that question, and I know some teachers have been engaged in discussions with me on this, too. Once presented with the facts, they come to understand that, really, what we're doing in the opposition is not to ask for anything radical but to simply codify what exactly exists in this labour relations board ruling. So what possible reason could there be for an outright ignorance of our perspective?

Could it possibly be that they want to retain the political support of teacher federations? I know the Minister of Education and the Premier were at OECTA; they were at their conference a couple of weeks ago. I want to state that something really interesting happened at that conference. They debated whether or not they should use their reserve fund of \$2.8 million to campaign against the Ontario PCs in the next election. Something very interesting happened. In the course of the initial debate, teachers actually rejected that idea. They don't want to use their \$2.8-million fund to campaign against the Tories, except there was one teacher who actually got up and said, "You know, I think we've got this wrong. We're going to have to use this fund against them, or else we're going to go on strike." So what happens in the presence of the minister and the Premier is that they reverse that decision. Now \$2.8 million of reserve fund is going to be used against the Tories in the next election by the Ontario Catholic teachers.

## 0940

I'm wondering whether the simple refusal to incorporate a simple request of putting co-instructional activities into the definition of "strike," their refusal to do that, wasn't somewhat related to the fact that they didn't want to upset the wealth of funds that might be used against

their chief rivals when it comes to the next election. Of course, we're not going to be able to match \$2.8 million in third party advertising. We're not even talking about the Working Families Coalition budget, which is likely going to be three or four times more than that.

The calculus of this government isn't to help parents; it's to stay in power. That's what they do. That's what they are known to do. Their simple refusal, their outright rejection of a simple request to legislate what we already see in this Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling—we have to ask some serious questions as to why. Because it's written out there. The reasons aren't my reasons. This isn't my decision; this is a decision that was rendered by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. So I think it's very important to see what we see in the context of that.

So here we are. The bill that we have in front of us. Bill 122, has about 100 amendments that are before the committee. We were told that through the course of creating this bill, months and months of negotiation were put in place. We were told that this bill was going to come to this Legislature in early September. Well, it didn't come in early September. They were late. Their legislation wasn't tabled until the end of October. We were debating it into November. They time-allocated that, and we're in committee. But months and months of negotiation with all these "partners of education"—it was so badly written that it required nearly 100 amendments to fix. And then what happened, which was more interesting than that, was that after the bill was tabled in late October, the government was in negotiation with the partners to see what kind of modifications were necessary. So they had their talks, they had their negotiation to find some acceptable path forward. Well, you know what? The rest of us in the opposition, whether it's New Democrats or Conservatives, and probably the vast majority of MPPs who are on the government side, have absolutely no idea what was discussed in those closeddoor meetings.

So first of all, we were time-allocated in second reading debate. Secondly, we were restricted to three hours of public hearings on a very important and vital piece of legislation, one that ignored the vital partner in our education system, which is our parents and our students. We decided to look at clause-by-clause, and to speed the process of clause-by-clause we suggested that we incorporate for parents and students, who they neglected to talk to, some protection of co-instructional activities in the bill. They took the "strike" definition from the Education Act and put it in the bill. They did that; I didn't do that. So they did that. We raised the issue. They could have negotiated, but rather than negotiation they engaged in a protracted process where this bill stalled in committee for weeks.

Now we're at a point in time where we're sitting here, on April 1—I thought this was an April fool's joke, actually—talking about whether members of this Legislature should further limit debate on a bill they already were limited in debating, Madam Speaker.

And this time allocation motion doesn't just limit the debate in committee for a number of hours, but what I

think is far more discouraging is the fact that when this bill comes to third reading, 107 members of this Legislature—106 minus the Speaker—have to fight for 20 minutes per party to actually put in their two cents on this particular piece of legislation. I'm not quite sure what that works out to and how many seconds are allotted to each legislator on that debate.

This is a very serious bill, the implications of which are going to be far-reaching. I think one aspect in this bill that we should consider is actually introducing a clause that has a review period, that after this process of collective bargaining goes through, we come back after that process to see if the system worked or it didn't.

But you know what, Madam Speaker? Some of those great ideas that we might enlist in improving this legislation will not be debated in clause-by-clause if they had not been put in place as of March 24, which was last week, some very important ideas that could improve and strengthen this bill. I made it clear we were putting the amendments that we were putting forward very simply because that's what we wanted to talk about, but there are other ideas that could have strengthened this bill that the members of the opposition are simply going to have no opportunity to bring forward.

I think what this is going to show is that we're going to have a process that this Legislature may agree upon that may be flawed and that we can do very little about. I think that is the most disheartening process of why this time allocation motion should be defeated.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, provincial funding for education has changed in a very fundamental way. Negotiations in that sector will have to change as well to reflect those new realities. The bill before us is meant to do that, because these are very important matters for this province.

The existing bill contains some substantial flaws. We in the NDP have proposed amendments to the bill, as has the government, at the request of stakeholders, and in our opinion this bill is only acceptable if it is amended for greater fairness and balance.

It has been claimed that the government is putting forward this bill as a way of preventing a repeat of the experience with Bill 115, and as I have said before, if a government is prepared to ignore the Constitution, no bill is going to prevent it from acting in an arbitrary way in the future. This bill may be many things, but it is not something that will prevent Bill 115 type experiences in the future.

Major stakeholders—boards, teachers, education workers—want a more predictable environment for bargaining. Families and students want more stability in the system. We want to amend this bill. We want to get back to clause-by-clause in order to try and meet the legitimate needs of all those who have a deep interest in the success of our schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 43. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be deferred until after question period. *Vote deferred.* 

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Seeing no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0950 to 1030.

# WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of

Labour on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members of this Legislature be permitted to wear pins in recognition of Parkinson's Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent to wear ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

# INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome the mother of the page captain today, Nick Lacoste, from the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga—Debra—as well as her friend Wanda Woods. They'll be in the members' gallery. Welcome to question period. Good luck today, Nick.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome page Jane Oleksiw's aunt. Ola Bodnar is here today, so I'd like to

welcome her.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome, from the riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, the parents of page captain Jonah Opler. We have here with Jonah his mother, Cindy Opler, and his father, Michael Opler. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome students from my riding of Whitby—Oshawa, from École secondaire Saint-Charles-Garnier. They'll be joining us shortly in the gallery.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour for me to have my daughter, Annie, joining us later. My wife, Kate

Bartz, will be coming here at some point.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I just want to say—I don't know if we should touch on the topic, though—that it is April Fool's Day. I'm just throwing it out there now, if anybody wants to jump in. I just won't mention—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is well

received.

Further introductions?

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** Thornhill resident Kevin Hanit is here; you can give us a wave. Kevin took public transit to come down and visit us today. Good for you, Kevin.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd like to welcome Karen Laffrenier. She's Callista Laffrenier's mom. I don't see her yet, but I saw her this morning. She's proud to be here, and she's a good neighbour of mine.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery, we have my other brother; Joe Peters is here joining us. For those not quite baptized in that manner, he's the brother of the former Speaker, Steve Peters.

Also in the gallery are my guests, retired Justice Ken Lenz and his wife, Pat Lenz. With them as well is a long-time friend of mine, the chair of Brantford International Villages and one of the originators, Pat Eyzenga. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're glad you're here, all three.

It is now time for question period.

# **ORAL QUESTIONS**

# ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, can you tell us exactly what the budget-leaking team is?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Finance is going to want to speak to the budget. What I will say is that, as in previous years under many governments, there is always a plan to foreshadow the budget. We will be bringing forward a budget. We will be bringing forward a budget that will invest in people, it will invest in infrastructure and it will invest in supports for businesses in this province.

We've been clear about that all along. We remain committed to making those investments. I'm not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition might take issue with that strategy, because he actually does not want to invest in the province. He thinks that cutting programs and undercutting business and individuals is the way to go. We don't believe that. We believe that investing in people is the way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I got an answer from the Premier on a very simple question. There's no listing in the Ontario civil service for something called the budget-leaking team. I understand this is a secret team that you've put together. So I'll ask you again if you could answer a very simple question on behalf of taxpayers: Can you describe exactly what the budget-leaking team is, who sits on it and what their purpose is?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I will say to the Leader of the Opposition and to the people of Ontario is that we are preparing a budget. We will be making announcements in advance of the budget, as is the practice of government after government.

We will be making investments in the people of Ontario, we will be making investments in infrastructure and we will be making investments in a business environment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that will allow the economy to thrive.

That is what I have said all along. That is what I have said about our budget. That is what will be in our budget. Do we have a communications plan, Mr. Speaker?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've asked for order. Now I'll ask individuals. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order. The member from Dufferin-Caledon will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Do we have a communications plan? Absolutely, and I'm sure that the Conservatives and NDP have communications plans. It's unfortunate-

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that those confidential plans may have been released, but the substance is exactly what I have said we are going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

ary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, I asked a very simple question. The Premier, for some reason, is not telling us exactly if the budget-leaking team exists or not. Until now, it had been kept secret. We did hear from whistleblowers within the civil service who are very concerned that you are now drafting Ontario public servants to do the work of the Ontario Liberal Party. It's not their job. They have a job to do, but it's not to be Liberal Party staffers.

Premier, let's be clear about this. I fully expect that you are aware of what's happening in your own office. You would have been briefed on this, if not come up with the idea yourself. Can you please tell me if the budgetleaking team, secret until today, is staffed by political staff or staffed by bureaucrats?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are putting together a budget. We are putting together and have a communications plan. We are going to be investing in people in this province, we are going to be investing in infrastructure and we are going to be working to partner with business to make sure that they can create jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was at a business this morning in north Etobicoke with MPP Shafiq Qaadri and we made an announcement about investing in Club Coffee. We're putting \$5 million into that company so that they can expand, so that they can create more jobs and export around North America and around the world.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It has everything to do with the budget because the budget is about investing in the economy of the province. That's what we're doing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

# ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll try again. The Premier seems to be avoiding answering my very direct and simple questions. I'm confused as to why she won't confirm or deny that this secret budget-leaking team exists, nor will she confirm or deny that she has drafted civil servants to do the work of the Ontario Liberal Party.

We fully expect Liberal Party staffers to figure out communications, but we do not expect you to draft public servants to do the work-

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's not what they are there for. This shows me further a Premier who is more concerned about protecting her own job than creating jobs for-

Interiection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You seem to be oblivious, or you claim to be oblivious, to what's happening within your own government, your own office, from the OPP investigation of potential criminal activity and the destruction of documents, now to this budget-leaking team. I'll ask one more time. This is try number four. Can you confirm that the secret budget-leaking team exists, and if so, is it staffed by bureaucrats or Liberal Party staff?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say to the leader of the third party, the jobs that I'm protecting and the jobs that we're working to create are jobs for the people of Ontario. We're making investments in order that we can have an economy that's thriving.

So are we preparing a budget? Absolutely. Are finance officials engaged in preparing that budget? Absolutely. I think the people of Ontario would be shocked if I said, "No, the Ministry of Finance officials are not involved in preparing a budget." Do we have a communications plan? Absolutely.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton will come to order and the member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We will deliver on that commitment to bring forward a budget that will invest in the people of this province, that will invest in infrastructure and that will support a business climate that will attract jobs to the province. That is what the substance of our budget will be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm going to send over to the Premier a list of people on the budget-leaking team. This information was given to us by civil servants, whistleblowers, who are concerned that you're abusing your power as Premier to put Liberal Party interests ahead of the interests of taxpayers or the civil service.

I asked you four times, Premier, if this group existed. You refused to answer. I don't know why you're being so extraordinarily evasive when it comes to very basic questions here today. What are you trying to hide?

I'll ask one of the pages to bring this over to the Premier. Can the Premier confirm that Matthew Sylvain, Kyle MacIntyre, Stephen Donnelly and others on this list are paid Liberal staff? Or is it, as we fear from the whistle-blowers, civil servants you're drafting to do the work of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say again to the Leader of the Opposition, yes, we are preparing a budget. I believe that that is absolutely our responsibility, to prepare a budget, to work with the officials in finance. Of course, they are working to prepare that budget. Do we have a communications plan? Absolutely, we have a communication plan.

I think what the Leader of the Opposition is really concerned about is that he doesn't support the investments that we're putting forward. He—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community and Social Services, come to order, and for the third time, the member from Renfrew—sorry, second time. Because you're counting, you only have one left.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is not surprising to me that the leader of the third party would be somewhat exercised about investments in the province, because it's not what he supports. He opposes making investments. He opposes supporting business. He opposes supporting the talent and skills of this province. So I don't expect him to agree with us, but I do expect him to understand that we're going to bring that budget forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

ary?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** We on this side certainly appreciate that the Premier showed up for question period today. I just wish we had some answers to, honestly, very basic questions.

You've had the list to study. This looks to me like the Liberal Party that, once again, is more concerned about keeping their government limousines, their cabinet minister titles, and spending whatever it takes to keep their jobs. I'm more concerned about creating good jobs with better take-home pay for all Ontarians. That's what my plan is.

I guess it's my last chance. We'll continue to ask this, Premier. Can you confirm or deny the existence of the hitherto secret budget-leaking team, and can you tell me also that your plan is to make 39 different spending announcements totalling \$5.7 billion in the next 21 days? That's the information we've had from the whistle-blowers. And if that's the case, where are you going to find the money?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Finance. *Interiections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, I know how to do that, and you're wasting your own time. I called for you to do it—and I don't want the responses either.

**Hon.** Charles Sousa: I'm just adding impact, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted them to listen very carefully.

This is what is happening, and this is what I can confirm: We on this side of the House are preparing a budget, a very forward-thinking plan, one that will be released in the coming weeks here in this very House, one that is being used and worked on with a number of officials from the ministry, including members of our political staff, and one that includes a rollout of a coms team that I am very proud of. The people of Ontario will be very proud of this budget as well, because it speaks to the needs of that community, it talks about investing in our people, it talks about being very strategic in our investments in infrastructure and creating jobs, and it talks about maintaining a very dynamic business climate.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You'll not know when I decide to stop the last people.

Leader of the third party.

# POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker. It's nice to be missed. I want to thank the Premier for showing up to Queen's Park today, as well, to question period. There are some important questions that the people of this province deserve answers to, and the buck stops with the Premier when it comes to answering them.

What services was Peter Faist supplying to the Liberal Party in the last week?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me first say that I know that the leader of the third party, who puts herself forward as a champion of the north, will understand that it was very important that I meet with the businesses that I met with yesterday in Sault Ste. Marie—

Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order. Second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: She will know that it was very important for me to meet with the folks at Algoma University to talk about the expansion to their athletic complex. She will know that it was very important for me to visit with the students at Francis Clergue school. She would know, because she does put herself forward as a champion of the north, that it is not appropriate to make plans weeks in advance and then cancel them. So I was very pleased to have been able to be in Sault Ste. Marie, and I'm happy to answer her other questions in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A Premier who preaches accountability should know that that takes showing up in the Legislature to answer questions of the opposition.

Mr. Faist's services were abruptly terminated over the weekend. If he was merely providing routine services, as the Liberals insist, why was his contract terminated?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I worked all day yesterday, until midnight, and I have never walked out of this Legislature. Never have, never will.

Let me just say that we learned on Thursday of the allegations about the former chief of staff in the former Premier's office. Following these revelations, we put in place an internal investigation, we conducted that, and it was determined that the company previously did occasional IT services in the caucus office under the former Premier, and in the party office—and that was until January 2013. Those IT services only continued with the party until we discovered—and on Sunday those services were terminated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

**Ms.** Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Mr. Faist has worked closely with the Liberal Party and the Liberal caucus for some time, as the Premier has indicated, yet this internal Liberal Party investigation of his services brought about his immediate termination. What exactly was found in that investigation is what I would like to know from the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I said was that this IT company did some work with the caucus services before I was in this office, until January 2013. I was not in this office until February 11. There was a continuation, there was some work that was done for the Liberal Party until we did our internal investigation after the allegations came forward on Thursday. As of Sunday, those services were terminated. That is a decision that we made on Sunday.

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# POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. For more than a year, people in the Premier's office have known that the partner of a Liberal staffer came into their office to wipe their computers. At least, that's what they told OPP investigators. But for a year, the Premier and her staff never came forward, never shared these facts with the public. Now we learn the same individual was working for the Liberal Party even while this Premier insisted she didn't know him. Yet they expect us to take the Liberal Party at their word when they say there's nothing more to see.

Does the Premier think that saying "I know nothing about this" is good enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear: I learned of the allegations on Thursday, and the allegations are against the former chief of staff of the former

Premier. It has nothing to do with the staff member who has been mentioned by the leader of the third party.

Nonetheless, we are in this process; there is a police investigation going on. They are doing their work. We need to let that work unfold.

I have said quite clearly, I am happy to debate—and I have been answering questions about the relocation of the gas plants for the last year. I have appeared before committee. We have opened up the process, and that is appropriate debate.

The allegations that the leader of the third party is commenting on are part of a process that the police are undertaking right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Ms.** Andrea Horwath: Speaker, on Friday I wrote to the Premier, making it plain that it's time for a public inquiry into the gas plant scandal and the cover-up. I have yet to receive a response from this Premier. Will the Premier finally call the public inquiry?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask

the leader of the third party to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We actually had this conversation a year ago, Mr. Speaker. I said that we were going to open up the process. We have done exactly that. The committee has seen tens of thousands of documents—I think hundreds of thousands of documents—and has had witnesses. I have appeared before the committee twice, and my understanding is that the committee is still calling witnesses. The fact is, there's an investigation that's ongoing. We need to let that unfold.

The reality is, the only reason we're having this discussion is because we did open up the process. We opened up the process. We made it clear that we were going to provide any of the information that was relevant. We have done that. We will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The only reason we are where we are now is because we have a minority Parliament and this government has been forced to answer the questions of the opposition.

For the families that are stuck paying the bills, the Premier's story is pretty hard to believe. The Liberals keep insisting that there is nothing more to see here, folks. That's just not good enough.

The Premier leads a Liberal Party that wasted over \$1 billion and now has key political staff under criminal investigation by the OPP anti-rackets squad. If the Premier is actually interested in getting the facts out, why won't she allow for a completely independent, truly unbiased public inquiry?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I would put the OPP in the "unbiased" category, and they are doing their work.

Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly—and I have taken responsibility—that there were mistakes made, that there were things done that should not have been done and that there were decisions made that should not have been

made. I have said that we need new rules. We're putting those new rules in place. We have new rules about document retention. We have training that has taken place with all staff. The Minister of Energy is putting new rules in place in terms of siting energy infrastructure. We have made changes over the last year as a result of this discussion.

That has nothing to do with being in a minority Parliament. That has to do with the integrity of this government and our understanding of what needs to happen in order to make decisions properly in the future.

Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. New question.

# ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, our leader, Tim Hudak, has presented you with evidence of your secret budget-leaking team, code-named BLT. It is reminiscent of the existence of code names during the gas plant scandal, with titles Project Vapour and Project Apple.

The BLT's purpose is to leverage the size and scope of the Ontario civil service towards the goal of doing the pre-election campaign work of the Liberal Party. The plan is to have taxpayer-paid employees leak out 39 budget plan details over the next month. This is the same self-interested behaviour we saw when the Liberals blew \$1 billion to cancel two gas plants to save five seats, against the advice of their own advisers in the civil service. When will you end the practice of putting the Liberal Party ahead of the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear to all those that are listening and watching. Let's be clear to all Ontarians. This is not about the fortunes of any political party who are doing political gimmicks and playing cheap tricks to try to get and play at the lowest level of politics. It is untoward what they are doing. This is not about the fortunes of that political party there, or any; it's about the fortunes of Ontarians. We're going to deliver a budget. It's in progress—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that you've finished, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex will come to order—second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the budget is in progress. Nothing has yet been finalized. We want everyone to know that the budget will be presented right here in this very House, for the people of Ontario, and we have asked the people of Ontario for their submissions. All of us have been working on this together. The opposition have decided not to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I must say, Premier, I think the lowest level is co-opting tax-paid employees to disclose your secret BLT. That's the lowest level. This BLT confirms the fact that the Liberals are withholding the 2014 budget from the public and from the credit rating agencies to use it as a political tool to help in their re-election bid. Even more damning, the Liberals' budget-leaking team also oversees the use of taxpayer dollars to advertise and promote these new Liberal initiatives. Basically, the Liberal Party has co-opted tax-paid Ontario government employees to run its election campaign for the next month.

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Premier, those safe hands you keep talking about are found to be digging into taxpayers' pockets yet again to get you re-elected. What's so safe about that?

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite repeatedly asks for transparency and more information. The member opposite wants us to come forward with our long-term plan, which is coming in the coming week. The member opposite wants that budget presented in this House. The member opposite wants it to be audited and wants the integrity of those numbers to be confirmed, which they are. In fact, the government of Ontario was rated the top in the nation for integrity of our numbers and the disclosure of what we are doing. We'll continue to do that. We'll continue to work with all of our stakeholders. I am very proud of the staff at the Ministry of Finance and the work that that team has done alongside myself and others to present a budget that is wholesome and, yes, very aspirational because it's long-term in its view. They choose not to do that, Mr. Speaker. They choose gutter politics. They choose to smear the very individuals that are working on behalf of the public service for the benefit of others.

# POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier say right now that she thinks Peter Faist should come to the justice committee and answer questions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.
Hon. John Milloy: I think all members realize this is a very serious situation. The justice committee is looking into the matter. There's a process in place in which they can come forward with witness lists and call those witnesses forward. I think we should allow the committee to undertake the work that's set out and to determine which witnesses it wishes to call and undertake that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I didn't see that coming. Again to the Premier: As we heard in committee this morning, we're having a hard time reaching Mr. Faist. Are the Liberals prepared to use the information they have to help us locate him? Or better yet, does the Premier know where he is?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that when it comes to members of the government, including the Premier, including the Minister of Energy, including myself, we have made ourselves available to the committee. In terms of other witnesses, it's up to the committee to decide what that list is and to pursue the matter as it sees fit. There are processes that are in place.

I know, speaking on our side of the Legislature, we were very, very disappointed. We wanted the Conservative candidates from the election—the same ones who made claims that the only way to have these gas plants cancelled was to elect them—to come before the committee and talk about their financial analysis, about the policy work that was done, and they in fact didn't appear in front of the committee.

As far as this government is concerned, we have cooperated fully with the committee in terms of the witnesses and the documents that have been requested.

## MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, I cannot forget, and my constituents cannot forget, that our community is on the traditional lands of the Mississauga First Nations, and that is why I'm proud of our government's strong record and our Premier's strong record on consulting and working with numerous aboriginal communities across Ontario. By creating the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in 2007, we are continually strengthening these important partnerships.

I hear the minister say in the House that Ontario is taking action to drive smart, sustainable and collaborative development in the Ring of Fire. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Northern Development and Mines please educate the House on how Ontario is ensuring a collaborative approach to Ring of Fire development with our aboriginal partners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for asking that question. The timing, may I say, is impecable. Our commitment to a collaborative approach was demonstrated very clearly just this past Wednesday when I had the privilege of signing, on behalf of the province, a landmark agreement with the nine Matawa First Nations chiefs. What is so important is that will ensure that the Matawa First Nations truly benefit from the Ring of Fire development.

This regional framework agreement is an absolutely vital step in a historic community-based negotiation process. It really does ensure that First Nations and Ontario

will work together to advance the Ring of Fire opportunities. The agreement lays out the framework for regional, long-term environmental, enhanced participation in the environmental assessment process, resource revenue-sharing—a number of important factors.

A tremendous day, a great opportunity—we are looking forward to moving forward with the Ring of Fire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you to the minister for the update. This collaborative approach is truly impressive, and it is this type of collaborative approach that makes our mining sector a Canadian leader in exploration and development—responsible and sustainable exploration. The minister stated that this framework agreement was just one of many ways we are moving forward on the Ring of Fire.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, how is our government moving forward on this nationally significant project?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you again for the question. I very much appreciate the description that this is a nationally significant project, because that's exactly what this multi-generational project is. To make sure that everybody in the House knows and everyone else knows: We are leading the creation of a development corporation to move the infrastructure process forward.

We have often said—the Premier has said—we're moving on a parallel path. The First Nations negotiation process was absolutely vital, and we made a great step forward last week, but certainly we've begun real discussions with several of the key partners as we move forward with this important process. We have retained Deloitte, an experienced company related to governance issues, and we are very keen to continue to move forward on that aspect of the project as well.

What I want to do today, though, is once again call on the federal government to partner with us, with our development corporation, to develop vital infrastructure for this region. They've invested in many other nationally significant projects in Newfoundland, British Columbia and Alberta—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

# **POWER PLANTS**

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government House leader admitted that Peter Faist worked for the Ontario Liberal caucus at one point and for the Ontario Liberal Party, under your leadership, until Sunday.

Given the severity of the OPP allegations involving Mr. Faist during the time he worked for her party and surrounding the deletion of emails and wiping hard drives in the Premier's office, can the Premier, as Liberal leader, tell this House if Mr. Faist had undergone a security clearance before he accessed sensitive files either for her party or for the Premier's office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to repeat for the member opposite that we learned about the allegations on Thursday about the former chief of staff of the former Premier. The individual about whom she is speaking was not the subject of these allegations. Following the revelations about the connections, an internal investigation was conducted, and it was determined, as I have said, that this particular company did some work previously for the caucus office under the former Premier. That ended in January 2013.

There was some service provided by the company to the party office until Sunday. Having determined that this person still was doing some work, we terminated that service on Sunday. As I said, we made that decision as soon as we determined that he was providing services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is a reasonable question that Ontarians and Liberal Party members would want to know. We know that Mr. Faist has refused to speak with the OPP over the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal; we know we're having a very difficult time reaching him to come into the justice committee. We'll deal with a Speaker's warrant if the time comes.

Given the nature of this scandal and the OPP revelations and given Mr. Faist's alleged role as an employee of the Liberal Party of Ontario, I ask you again: As leader of the Liberal Party who had this individual under your employment up until Sunday, did he or did he not undergo a security clearance to deal with these sensitive files either through the Legislative Assembly or through your party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, this was work that was done for the caucus office under the former Premier. The allegations that came to light on Thursday were allegations against the former Premier's former chief of staff.

I would say this to the member opposite: The committee, whose scope we opened up—the process that we initiated in order to get information into the public realm—will continue to do its work. I know that the committee will continue to call people to speak to it, and that is as it should be. When I came into this office, that is exactly what I said should happen. So we're going to let that process unfold, and we'll leave it to the committee to call the people whom they choose to call.

# POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Again to the Premier: Can the Premier tell Ontarians if she discussed the gas plant cover-up with her cabinet secretary and what the secretary told her?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would want the member to withdraw that comment

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Can the Premier tell Ontarians if she discussed the gas plant matter and records with her cabinet secretary and what the secretary told her?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that I have been before the committee

twice. I have answered all the questions about what I know about this matter. I have repeated it over and over again. He can check Hansard; he can look at the records from the committee. I have been very clear about my involvement, which really was very limited.

What is critical is that he understand and that the people of Ontario understand that I have taken responsibility. I have said that there were decisions made that should have been different. I have said that there were processes that needed to be changed, and we have changed those processes. We have put new rules in place about document retention. We have trained all of our staff. We have, working with the Minister of Energy, put new rules in place about siting energy infrastructure. Those are the actions that we have taken in addition to opening up the process around these questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There are a lot of words there, but no answer.

Does the Premier expect Ontarians to believe that the head of the Ontario public service, a gentleman who told police that he was uncomfortable with the goings-on in the Liberal Premier's office, never once talked to the Premier about the destruction of emails that happened during February and March 2013?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the member opposite is talking about actions that took place before I was the Premier. As soon as I became the Premier, we worked to open up the process and change the rules. The fact is that the allegations that have come forward in the last few days have been about the former Premier's office and the former Premier's chief of staff.

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Indeed, I have had many conversations with the secretary of cabinet about how to change the rules and make sure that the document retention rules and the training were put in place. We have had conversations with the privacy commissioner in order to put the right framework in place. That's what we have done, and we will continue to co-operate with whoever has more questions of us, Mr. Speaker.

## EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail, the Honourable Kevin Flynn. Before posing the question, I'd also just like to thank the Premier for the advanced manufacturing announced in my own riding of Etobicoke North just an hour ago.

Speaker, the inaugural question to our new Minister of Labour: It has been said that how a society deals with its youth will determine its prosperity. Of course, our investments include things like full-day kindergarten all the way up to world-class schooling, something that's valued by my own residents in Etobicoke North.

But for many young folks, it's still a difficult challenge for them to acquire positions and placements in internships. Our Youth Employment Fund has, in fact, helped 9,800 young people find meaningful employment,

which is, of course, commendable. Internships: There are still a lot of issues associated with that.

My question is, what are we doing to ensure that young people in my community who start a new job will be paid for the work they do?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Thank you to the fine member from Etobicoke North for that very timely question. We all know that building a strong workforce is also about building safe workplaces and fair workplaces.

In Ontario, the rules on internships are very, very clear. It doesn't matter what your job title is or what your position is; if you perform work for someone, you're covered by the Employment Standards Act, and you deserve to be paid the minimum wage. There's a narrow exemption for co-op students, for trainees and for the self-employed.

The ministry has been extremely active on this issue to try to get the word out to others. We have reached out to post-secondary institutions, employers and job sites to make sure there is no confusion. We've also updated our Web page and done a lot of work on social media to make sure that everybody in Ontario understands the rules on internships.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister Flynn, for your first answer as our newly minted Minister of Labour. I know that the labour ministry will be under good stewardship under your watch.

I appreciate, first of all, your outlining the strong rules for internships here in Ontario. My own constituents value this, as we're reaching out to young people, businesses and institutions. But I still hear from folks in my own riding that although the Ministry of Labour is there to help them, sometimes they have a challenge to reach out to them.

We've also seen, as you know very well, issues within the publication industry and the press with regard to unpaid internships.

So my question is, Minister, how is the ministry exercising oversight and making sure that these youth are protected?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again, I'd like to thank the fine member from Etobicoke North for the thoughtful question. I can assure the member that the government is working very hard to ensure that our youths' rights are protected.

We are the very first government to conduct proactive inspections, and while they're out in the field, the enforcement officers specifically ask about internships.

We have invested an additional \$3 million per year for this proactive enforcement. We're making sure that more businesses are inspected and more workers' rights are protected.

This spring, we'll be conducting a blitz that's going to look directly at this issue. Any concerns regarding arrangements can be referred to the Ministry of Labour's hotline: 1-800-531-5551. Confidential help is available in 23 languages. We will review any and all complaints to enforce these rules.

Speaker, we are working very hard to ensure that Ontario's youth have a solid and a very safe start to their work life

# POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you seem to have your dates a little crossed up, so I want to lay this out for you. You met with the leader of the official opposition on January 28, 2013, and asked him to stop pursuing the truth about the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal. Then, on February 7, you wrote to the Auditor General to ask him to expand the probe on the gas plant scandal to include the Oakville power plant. But between those times, the OPP says Peter Faist was in the Premier's office, purging documents off computers.

How can you be responsible for taking meetings on the gas plant scandal and asking the Auditor General to further probe the gas plant scandal but be completely removed from the deputy chief of staff's IT-savvy boyfriend destroying files on the gas plant scandal? Premier, you're ministerially responsible for that office. Why don't you explain yourself?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say this: I came into this office knowing that there was a need for an opening up of the process around the relocation of the gas plants. I knew that. It was discussed during the leadership race. We talked about it, and we knew there was going to need to be a different process whereby information could be brought to the public.

I absolutely came into this office and wanted to do everything that I could to make sure there was the opportunity for the members of the opposition, but for the public also, more importantly, to have the information that was needed.

We opened up the process. I said I was going to do that, and that's what we have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Premier, the best defence is a good offence, but your house of cards falls to pieces when you can no longer muzzle the people around you. You tried to muzzle the member for Nipissing after you redacted the wrong documents in the estimates committee. You're trying to muzzle the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nepean–Carleton, to change the channel on your \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal.

The problem is, Premier, that no one takes you seriously. You can't even muzzle your own government bureaucrats and prevent them from leaking out your crass political spending plans.

How can you call yourself an open, honest and transparent government when you refuse to answer questions and can't go a day without dragging honourable members of this Legislature through the mud? Premier, it doesn't get much lower than that. You should apologize to the people of Ontario for your smear campaign.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will debate issues that have a basis in truth, that are honest and that have evidence to support them. I will debate those any day, which is why I said, when I came into this office, that it was very important to me that we open up the process and we provide any answers to questions that were put forward, and that we broaden the scope of the committee so that those answers could be brought forward.

In terms of our budget, I'm happy to talk with the member opposite about our plan for the budget. I'm happy to talk about how important I believe it is that we invest in the people of this province and not cut their programs, not cut their health care, not cut their education and not undermine labour in this province. I'll debate that with you any day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

# POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. People throughout the OPS and senior Liberal ranks told the police that they knew that computers in the Premier's office had been tampered with, but the Premier claims that she had no idea. When did she first learn that computers in the Premier's office had been wiped and emails deleted?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There were allegations that came forward on Thursday about the former Premier's chief of staff—the former Premier's chief of staff, Mr. Speaker. The former Premier's chief of staff never worked for me. He was never in my office. He was never part of my staff.

Let me just repeat: The allegations that came forward on Thursday were about the former Premier's chief of staff. That person has never worked for me and was never in my office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let me clarify some dates. The OPP court document says that they "believe David Livingston committed the offence of breach of trust by allowing ... Peter Faist to ... access 24 computers in the Premier's office between the 6th of February and the 20th of March, 2013."

Did Peter Faist erase computers while the Premier was in office?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just be clear: The allegations are about the former Premier's chief of staff. The other individual who the member opposite has named is someone who did provide service to the Liberal caucus office up until January 2013. I became the Premier in this office on February 11. He no longer was providing services to the Liberal caucus.

That individual was providing some services to the Liberal Party when these allegations against the former Premier's chief of staff came to light. We did an internal investigation, determined that this person was still providing some services to the Liberal Party—not in my office, but to the Liberal Party—and we terminated those services.

# **TOURISM**

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. According to Tourism Toronto, last year we welcomed the largest number of overseas visitors on record. This is great news for Toronto, and I can certainly see why tourists would want to visit the entire region. There are many attractions to enjoy, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, and Ripley's brand new aquarium, which opened this fall with tremendous success.

As the member from Vaughan, I'm also very proud to have wonderful attractions in my community, like Legoland, the McMichael art gallery and Canada's Wonderland, right within driving distance of Toronto.

Speaker, can the minister please inform the House regarding how we are working as a government to stimulate even more investment for Ontario's tourism industry?

**Hon. Michael Chan:** Thank you for the question. The weather is warmer; the daylight is longer. I'm very pleased to rise today to talk about tourism.

Our government understands the important role that the tourism sector plays in building a strong economy and creating jobs. As a matter of fact, it creates hundreds of thousands of jobs and generates billions of dollars for our economy. Our tourism attractions stimulate local economies and help make Ontario a premier tourism destination.

This is why my ministry supports investment projects by the private sector throughout the planning and development phases. The member is right: We invested in the new Ripley's Aquarium of Canada in Toronto, which will attract an estimated two million visitors in its first year of operations. That's great for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for his response and for the outstanding response that he's doing for the people of Ontario.

As he mentioned, the tourism sector is a key component of Toronto's cultural and recreational fabric, but it's also responsible for generating jobs and revenue for the province. The tourism sector generates billions of dollars for Ontario's economy and supports over 300,000 jobs. It was also, and importantly, the single largest employer of young people in the province. Supporting tourism has truly helped to raise the profile of Ontario as a world-class destination, making it a great place for international visitors to invest.

Speaker, can the minister please update the House regarding what actions are being taken to ensure that tourism remains an essential part of Ontario's economy?

Hon. Michael Chan: Definitely, tourism is an essential part of the province's economic development and investment attraction strategy. My ministry continues to

implement our tourism investment strategy, launched in November 2012, which aims to raise the profile of Ontario as a place to invest.

Here are some examples of the projects that we are working to support: the Fort Erie Canadian Motor Speedway, which recently broke ground; Skyline Developments' Georgian Valley project; and Triple Properties' proposed Durham Live! project in Pickering.

In addition to our own investment attraction efforts, my ministry is also working closely with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment to leverage their significant investment attraction efforts as well.

# **POWER PLANTS**

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is also for the Premier. Premier, when the province's top bureaucrat, Peter Wallace, was before the justice committee last June, he gave testimony that, in hindsight, is quite shocking.

To paraphrase Mr. Wallace, he said that in the midst of a scandal that paralyzed your government—with the Minister of Energy facing contempt charges, with the former Premier having been chased from office and after years of questions about missing emails from the Office of the Premier—then, as the incoming Premier, you apparently asked no questions about the retention of email records, and neither did any of your staff. Mr. Wallace testified that conversations about document destruction in the Premier's office would take place on a political to political level. So tell us, Premier, why did you and your staff fail to ask routine questions of the outgoing staff? Is it because you already knew the answer and you just wanted to appear to be ignorant when the police came knocking?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, I knew when I came into this office that we needed to change the process around the relocation of the gas plants. I was aware of that. It was part of my platform when I came in as the Premier, Mr. Speaker. And so in those early days what I was working on was how we were going to open up the process, how we were going to make sure that all of the questions that the opposition and that the public wanted answers to would be answered. That's the work that we did in those early days. That's why the process got opened up. That's why there's as much information as there is in the public realm. I am glad that we have had the opportunity to provide the opportunity for the committee to do its work. It continues to do its work, and that's as it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Premier, this comes down to your credibility, and your claims of ignorance are not believable. We know from sworn

testimony from the head of the public service that your staff made no inquiries about email records that were the subject of substantial interest in this Legislature and elsewhere. What we don't know is what conversations took place between political staff in the outgoing Premier's office and your office about the work Peter Faist performed on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party. You're implying here today that your staff is fundamentally incompetent and that some conspiracy of silence exists in your office, where no one asks the inconvenient question. What is your defence? Enough is enough. Is it not finally time to let the people of Ontario pass judgment on your sorry record?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, it seems to me that for the last year there have been many difficult questions that have been asked and answered. We have shied away from none of those. We have answered the questions, we have provided documentation and, most importantly, we have acknowledged that there needed to be changes. We have changed the rules and the protocols around retention of information. We have changed the rules and the structures around locating gas plants and energy infrastructure. We have acknowledged that communities need to be more involved and they need to have more buy-in, and that is what is happening. I came into this office understanding that there needed to be changes. We have moved ahead and we have made those changes.

## POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** My question is to the Premier. Has the Premier or any member of her caucus or staff been investigated by the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite understands that there's an OPP investigation going on. We need to let that unfold. I think what is really critical is that we talk about how we make sure that we have the right rules in place, that we have had the right process. I would suggest that I came into this office and I knew that we needed to open up the committee process so that there could be a more complete discussion of the issues, which is why there have been hundreds of thousands of documents. Dozens of people have come forward to the committee and answered questions, including myself and the former Premier. The committee continues to do its work. The OPP is doing its investigation, and the committee is continuing to ask questions and to provide information for the public. That's as it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Well, Mr. Speaker, my question was whether anyone has been investigated, has anyone been interviewed. I didn't really hear an answer to that. I heard a lot of spinning. We are learning from former staff that they're refusing to be interviewed by the OPP.

1130

Will the Premier state now that she believes that the Liberals, both past staff and present staff, should be offering their full co-operation to the OPP as they conduct their investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader. Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, why will the opposition not deal with facts? The facts were outlined in a voluminous document that was released by the courts last week. If he wants to know the names of some of the individuals that were interviewed in there, I believe the member from Nipissing was interviewed by the police and the member from Cambridge was interviewed by the police.

The fact of the matter is, what this document concluded is that there were serious allegations against one individual: the former chief of staff of the Premier. This document asks for permission to get a warrant to continue the investigation to see if there is any basis for those allegations. I would think it would be prudent for all members of this Legislature to allow the OPP to do their work and to deal with the facts as outlined in this court document.

# ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

M. Bob Delaney: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Cela fait déjà quelques semaines que l'Université de Guelph a annoncé la fermeture de son Campus d'Alfred. Le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités nous a informé ensuite que le Collège Boréal et La Cité ont signé une entente de principe pour collaborer ensemble afin de maintenir l'enseignement agricole en français dans la région.

Nous sommes fiers que notre gouvernement a réussi à trouver une solution aussi rapidement. La ministre peutelle éclairer la Chambre sur ce que signifie cette entente de principe pour la communauté francophone?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Samedi dernier, j'étais à Rockland pour le gala de la francophonie de Prescott-Russell, et tous les gens là-bas voulaient venir me parler pour remercier notre gouvernement, et surtout remercier le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell pour le travail extraordinaire qu'il a fait pour garder l'institution francophone d'Alfred ouverte.

Alfred c'est le premier collège d'expression française en Ontario, et les participants à cet événement voulaient nous dire merci que maintenant le collège d'Alfred va demeurer un collège francophone géré par des francophones.

Présentement, il y a un comité qui se penche sur—un comité de transition, qui est formé du Collège Boréal, de La Cité, du ministère et de l'Union des cultivateurs, qui va mettre en place un processus pour justement assurer la pérennité du collège.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Question

supplémentaire?

M. Bob Delaney: Merci madame la Ministre. Je vois l'importance de l'éducation postsecondaire dans la création d'une identité forte pour la communauté franco-

phone de l'Ontario. Je rencontre moi-même tant de jeunes dans ma circonscription qui désirent continuer leur éducation en français, et je suis fier de leur parler de notre plan d'action pour améliorer l'accès à l'éducation en français dans le Centre-Sud-Ouest.

De plus, je sais que plusieurs de nos institutions postsecondaires franco-ontariennes ont un autre outil à leur disposition en demandant une désignation sous la Loi sur les services en français pour assurer une pérennité des cours offerts en langue française.

La ministre peut-elle informer la Chambre sur le statut des demandes de désignation des institutions postsecondaires?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci pour cette question importante. Oui, on est toujours fier de dire que nos jeunes francophones peuvent étudier à partir du jardin et aller jusqu'à la fin de l'université en français. Alors, il y a des demandes de désignation. On sait que La Cité collégiale, le Collège Boréal et l'Université de Hearst sont toutes des institutions francophones désignées, et on est en train d'étudier les demandes pour l'Université d'Ottawa et l'Université Laurentienne. Mais le collège d'Alfred veut aussi avoir la désignation pour assurer sa pérennité, parce qu'on sait que sous les deux gouvernements précédents, néo-démocrate et conservateur, le collège d'Alfred a été menacé à plusieurs reprises de fermer. Alors ils veulent, avec la désignation, assurer leur pérennité. Encore une fois, merci à mon collègue, Grant Crack, pour le travail extraordinaire qu'il a fait dans ce dossier.

# POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, once again you've been caught telling a story that just doesn't add up, and Ontarians are seeing right through it. You told us Peter Faist wasn't in your office, but you and your Liberal Party had a contract with him until he became politically inconvenient.

More than 80 witnesses, many of them Liberals, including you, have come before the gas plant hearings, but it took the threat of jail doors slamming for Lauren Ramey to cop to what was really going on in the Premier's office. Now you're using a lawyer to make arguments that you can't make for yourself because you've lost the moral authority to lead, and no one believes you.

Premier, you continue to talk about these safe hands, but according to the OPP, the only Liberal safe hands are those in handcuffs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just repeat what I have already said a couple of times today. The individual that the member opposite is talking about is someone who worked and did some work for the caucus office before I was the Premier, up until January 2013, and continued to do some work with the Liberal Party. That work was terminated on Sunday. That's the reality.

# **DEFERRED VOTES**

# TIME ALLOCATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell. *The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.* 

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members take their seats, please. Thank you.

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 43. All those in favour, rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Albanese, Laura Balkissoon, Bas Berardinetti, Lorenzo Bradley, James J. Cansfield, Donna H. Chan, Michael Chiarelli, Bob Colle, Mike Crack, Grant Damerla, Dipika Del Duca, Steven Delaney, Bob Dhillon, Vic Dickson, Joe Duguid, Brad Flynn, Kevin Daniel Gerretsen, John Gravelle, Michael Hoskins, Eric Hunter, Mitzie Jaczek, Helena Kwinter, Monte Leal, Jeff MacCharles, Tracy Mangat, Amrit Matthews, Deborah

Mauro, Bill McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine

Milloy, John Moridi, Reza Murray, Glen R. Naqvi, Yasir Piruzza, Teresa Qaadri, Shafiq Sandals, Liz Sergio, Mario Sousa, Charles Takhar, Harinder S. Wong, Soo Wynne, Kathleen O. Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Amott, Ted Bailey, Robert Barrett, Toby Chudleigh, Ted Clark, Steve Dunlop, Garfield Elliott, Christine Fedeli, Victor Hardeman, Ernie Harris, Michael Hillier, Randy Holyday, Douglas C. Hudak, Tim Jackson, Rod Jones, Sylvia Leone, Rob MacLaren, Jack Martow, Gila McDonell, Jim McKenna, Jane McNaughton, Monte Miller, Norm

Milligan, Rob E.

Munro, Julia Nicholls, Rick O'Toole, John Ouellette, Jerry J. Pettapiece, Randy Scott, Laurie Smith, Todd Thompson, Lisa M. Walker, Bill Wilson, Jim Yakabuski, John Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. On April Fool's Day, I'm hoping the opposition will accept a pay freeze by the following:

I seek unanimous consent that the question on the motion of second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance is seeking unanimous consent that the question on the motion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm getting through this before you say that.

The Minister of Finance is seeking unanimous consent that the question on the motion of second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 177 be immediately called; and

That the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member for Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing, so that we all freeze our pay across the public sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe-Grey is seeking unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is now warned.

The member from Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent for the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon. *The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.* 

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? Introduction of guests?

I'm going to be patient here, because I think I see a dialogue going on for the introduction of guests who have not arrived yet.

I'll leave introduction of guests for a point of order from the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Tonight, there's a very important hockey game here in the city of Toronto. The Toronto Maple Leafs are up against the Calgary Flames, their playoff hopes hanging by a thread. I would just like all of us here in the Legislature to wish them the best of luck tonight against the Flames.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To avoid any kind of escalation of high emotions, as there are maybe different types of fans here in the building, I'll just indicate to the member that it's not a statement either.

The Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Nipissing and I will be watching very carefully this evening, Mr. Speaker, as the Niagara IceDogs face the North Bay Battalion. I would like to make a prediction that the Niagara IceDogs will be winning, and I certainly wish them the very best.

Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I wonder if the member for Nipissing wants some water.

Before I finish, I would like to tell the member that it's not a statement, and it's also not a point of order.

I understand that the member from Nipissing has a point of order as well.

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Trust me, Speaker, when I say this is a point of order: I'm still choking over the minister's statement about the Niagara something-or-other dogs down there.

North Bay has come from behind. It's a 3-3 tie. We're going to clean those dogs tonight.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You know what? I blame myself for this. The only reason I was delaying a little bit was that I got the impression there was somebody coming into the place who was going to be introduced. I don't think I see that.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still standing. I just thought I'd let the minister without portfolio know that.

We are almost prepared to move into members' statements, and I will be as generous as I possibly can with the minister without portfolio on a point of order.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** We have heard a lot about the other junior A teams, but actually the game of the night will take place in Kingston at the K-Rock Centre, when the Kingston Frontenacs will be meeting the Peterborough Petes. We in Kingston know that Kingston will be successful in the seventh game tonight.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought you were going to say something about the Jerseyville Sweethearts or something that effect—the little five-year-olds are playing.

It's time for members' statements.

# **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

# **CURLING**

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to congratulate four guys from Central Huron Secondary School in my riding on their victory in

the OFSAA, Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations, boys' curling gold medal game a couple of weeks ago.

Sault Ste. Marie has Team Jacobs, Winnipeg has Team Jones, and now Clinton celebrates Team Doig. Skip Ethan Doig, vice Adam Vincent, second Sam Steep and lead Alex Vincent were victorious in a close and exciting game against Kemptville's St. Michael Catholic high school. The game was very tight, and Team Doig was able to pull off a dramatic come-from-behind victory.

I also want to congratulate all the teams from the secondary schools across the province that won the opportunity to participate in OFSAA this year. No matter what your season turned out to be, you have found a sport that will continue to enrich your lives for years to come.

Curling is how many people in my riding pass the winter months, but it's so much more than that. It shows us the fun of friendly competition, but it also teaches teamwork, sportsmanship and good, old-fashioned community spirit.

I would be remiss if I didn't share with this assembly that the cost of electricity has gotten out of control at the hands of this Liberal government. It threatens the very rinks that are homes to champions. They deserve better, as does all of Ontario.

# SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's with great pride that I rise to announce today being the first day of Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario. It's the first legislation of its kind across Canada. It's a very happy day for Sikhs across the province, as April is already a month where Sikhs celebrate Khalsa Day and the formalization of the Sikh faith. Sikhs have been in Canada for hundreds and hundreds of years. In fact, as early as the late 1800s, a Sikh regiment paraded in the CNE, one of the first exhibitions held in Toronto. In addition, there are Toronto Star articles indicating a Dr. Sundar Singh, who lived in Toronto and was an advocate for social rights as early as 1911.

Sikhs have been a fabric of this community, of this province, contributing in economics, in science, in the medical field, in the business field as well as the political arena, and will continue to do so. One of our hopes is that, through information and awareness, we can replace some of the fear and ignorance of all faiths with understanding and acceptance, creating a climate where people can feel free to express themselves, express their spirituality and their diversity, and create a society here in Toronto and Ontario where all faiths are accepted, people are accepted for who they are, and diversity is something that we celebrate.

I'm very proud that Ontario is the first province in Canada to have created and enacted Sikh Heritage Month.

# SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** The Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, declared April as Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario.

It's an opportunity to remember, celebrate and to educate future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important role that they play in all of our communities across the province of Ontario.

April is important to the Sikh community. Sikh Canadians across Ontario prepare to celebrate Vaisakhi, marking the creation of Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith. Vaisakhi is also known as Khalsa Day. Everyone can participate in Khalsa Day celebrations by walking alongside the many thousands of members of the Sikh community in the procession route.

One of the main principles of Sikhism is the value of volunteering, charity work and giving back to the community. One sees the generosity of the Sikh community all over Mississauga, from hospital fundraisers to food bank support to blood donor clinics. The Sikh community has been prominent in supporting our local needs in our community and in community initiatives. An emphasis on education and awareness ensures that Sikhs work to enhance our vibrant, diverse and multicultural Ontario.

I am looking forward to continuing to participate in the many events surrounding Sikh Heritage Month in this, the year 2014.

# **NUISANCE BEARS**

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The municipality of Callander is concerned about the arbitrary limits that the Minister of Natural Resources placed on his spring bear hunt pilot project, announced last fall. The nuisance bear problem is well known across northern Ontario and rural Ontario and has been an issue for years as the government sat idly by, failing to act.

Now the government has adopted the stance that nuisance bears only affect the five major urban centres in the north, thus allowing spring bear hunt privileges to residents in the wildlife management units surrounding those centres. The aim, it would appear, is to allow the minister to say one thing about the bear hunt to northerners while saying another to those in the south.

The municipality of Callandar is excluded from the spring bear hunt area, and I can tell you, as I live in Corbeil next door, that nuisance bears are an issue there too. Council adopted a motion that "requests that the Ministry of Natural Resources include wildlife management unit 47" in the minister's spring bear hunt experiment. I concur with this, Speaker. Those of us who live in the north and who have had bears in their own backyard in Corbeil know what the solution to the nuisance bear issue is. We just need a government that will do the right thing.

1510

# PARKDALE ACTIVITY-RECREATION CENTRE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about a wonderful organization in Parkdale-High Park called Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre. They

started as an idea in 1977 but just celebrated their 35th anniversary of actual incorporation. They are a community hub, a community living room, for those with mental health and addiction issues.

This incredible organization has many, many workers under the able direction of their executive director, Victor Willis, who does exemplary work in the community.

Toby Dancer, who Toby's Law is named after—it had all-party support in this Legislature and has become law—was actually their music director, as well as the music director at our church when I was still in active ministry there, at Emanuel Howard Park. We actually shared some of the clients from PARC, who on Sunday evenings, when PARC would close, would come to our evening service and dinner as well.

It's an amazing organization. I went to their celebration and they had a cake walk where all the members baked cakes and paraded them around PARC, this community hub and living room. There was even a dragon.

It's also, I should say, a place where those with mental health and addiction issues can find work. Many of the PARC members have found work through them, employment through them, and I just want to give a shout out to the phenomenal social workers and others who work throughout PARC, and to their membership as well who work throughout our community.

# ISABELLA LEONE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to recognize an outstanding, courageous young girl who lives in my constituency of York South—Weston. Isabella Leone is just 5 years old, but has been battling leukemia since 2010. Thankfully, her leukemia has been in remission for over a year, but since being diagnosed, her family, and now her school, have undertaken incredible fundraising and awareness efforts.

Isabella was recognized by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society as an honoured hero for the 2012 Light the Night event fundraising initiative. As well, Isabella's dad, Scott Leone, has helped fundraise close to \$45,000 for the same organization, with a portion of the transactions from his real estate sales going towards the organization in care of Team Isabella.

This year Immaculate Conception Catholic Elementary School, which Isabella attends in York South-Weston, has kicked off the school's Loonies for Lent fundraiser in support of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, with each student encouraged to donate at least a dollar—a loonie. Immaculate Conception's fundraising drive intends to honour Isabella and another student who battled cancer last year.

The courage of Isabella herself in facing leukemia, and the wonderful leadership and support of her school and family in helping fundraise for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada, are to be applauded.

I want to thank Isabella for being a great example to all of us. I want to thank her, her family, her school, everyone involved, everyone who has donated, for helping them build hope in our community.

# SERENA RYDER

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today to congratulate Serena Ryder on winning two 2014 Juno awards: artist of the

year and songwriter of the year.

Raised in the small town of Millbrook, of course in the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Serena Ryder's love for music began at an early age. She started singing publicly as a young child and, having received a guitar from her father, began playing the instrument at the age of 13. After attending Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational Institute, Serena went on to record a demo at the age of 18, which helped launch her career. Serena Ryder won her first Juno for best new artist in 2008. Since then, her music has been celebrated from coast to coast.

This weekend, Serena Ryder had a very big presence at the 43rd Annual Juno Awards ceremony in Winnipeg, not only co-hosting and performing, but winning the two awards.

Even though Serena is on the big stage now, clearly her hometown remains close to her heart, mentioning Millbrook during her acceptance speech on Sunday.

Congratulations to Serena Ryder on this achievement. The town of Millbrook could not be more proud of her, and we continue to wish her success with her fantastic career.

# HEALING HOPE FUNDRAISING BRUNCH

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is my pleasure to rise and speak in the House today. I had the opportunity to attend a wonderful event in Scarborough this past weekend: the second Healing Hope brunch to raise funds for the Rouge Valley Centenary hospital, a hospital in my riding which serves the majority of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood.

The fundraiser was hosted by Ms. Letna Allen-Rowe, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011. Rouge Valley Centenary provided her with the life-saving treatment she required. In 2013, she launched the Healing

Hope brunch and raised \$5,500.

Dr. Naresh Mohan, chief of staff with the Rouge Valley Health System, and Dr. Marietta Zorn, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon with Rouge Valley, addressed a crowd of more than 200 people this past weekend, all of whom were there in support of Ms. Letna, a cancer survivor, and in support of finding more effective cancer treatment methods.

Here in Ontario, diversity is our strength. Ms. Letna is a perfect example of the strong, vibrant, hard-working people in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood and one of the many people in Ontario who work together to strengthen our province and our communities socially, culturally and economically. Thank you, Ms. Letna, for spreading joy. It is a gift that strengthens us all.

# NEWCASTLE FIRE HALL

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm very pleased to have a statement on my riding of Durham today. Just this past week,

they opened a brand new fire hall in the village of Newcastle. The fire hall is a state-of-the-art facility.

The municipality has been wrestling with the whole issue of whether or not to staff it with full-time fire-fighters or with volunteer firefighters. For over 40 years, the hall has been staffed by volunteers. It's quite controversial, because the discussion in the paper has been that the council had approved about \$400,000 to staff one shift and one truck. But if you went for seven days a week, 24 hours a day, it would be an expensive addition to the budget over a one-year period, so I wish them well.

Gord Weir is the fire chief of the new fire hall in Newcastle. It's going to be called the Alfred Alldread Newcastle Fire Station. The opening was on Saturday. It's interesting to note that the acting chief and one of the sergeants made a very good historic recount of the fire hall and its operation over the last 40 years out of a garage that had been modified to suit the purpose.

I want to commend the firefighters, especially the volunteer firefighters, and wish them well. I hope that some of them might be considered for full-time jobs in the future if and when they fund a full-time operation. That's good news from my village of Newcastle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

# REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 1, 2014, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report on diluted chemotherapy drugs from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of the recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, this report is the culmination of weeks of hearings and deliberations beginning in April of 2013, after the discovery that 1,212 patients in Ontario and New Brunswick had received diluted doses of two chemotherapy drugs. Key participants in the discovery and subsequent response appeared before the committees in April, May, June, September

and October of 2013. The report contains the committee's finding and makes recommendations to help ensure that this does not happen again.

I want to thank everyone who appeared before the committee for their contributions and commend the members of the committee for their diligence. I ask the assembly to give it full consideration.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman moves the adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

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# MOTIONS

# COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the membership composition of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that the following change be made to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: Mrs. Albanese replaces Mr. Flynn; and

That the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Ms. Wong replaces Mr. Mauro.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

# STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

# PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to speak to the important contributions of the Parkinson Society Ontario. I'm pleased to be joined by some wonderful members of the Parkinson Society today at Queen's Park. They are all with us here in the east members' gallery.

Degenerative diseases affect tens of thousands of individuals across this country. Families are left struggling to deal with an illness which is neither preventable nor treatable. Without prevention or a cure, Parkinson's robs an individual's freedom of mobility. However, in light of this hardship, we bear witness to incredible fortitude.

Mr. Speaker, 40,000 Ontarians live with this condition every day. They epitomize strength in very difficult times. The government can help to provide the best care

that it can to all of its citizens, but at times we must rely on community groups to bridge that gap. We have a societal duty to ensure that these individuals have the real supports that they need.

One way that the Ministry of Labour, as part of government, is working to bridge that gap is with Bill 21, Leaves to Help Families. This bill is all about compassion and would, if passed, ensure that Ontarians have the one thing they need most when a loved one is seriously ill: time to be there to support them. We hope that this bill, which is in third reading and has been for at least six hours, can come to the House for a vote very soon, so that hard-working families have more options to help and to be there for their loved ones.

In the meantime, I'd like to thank the Parkinson Society Ontario for all that they do to provide support to those who need it most in our communities. They offer 100 support groups, dealing with 8,000 cases a year, to the nearly 40,000 individuals affected by Parkinson's from across this province. Parkinson Society Ontario is the backbone of Parkinson's support in the province, and they are helping to ensure that those individuals need not face the challenges of their condition alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to respond to the minister's statement, and would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our guests in the gallery as well today.

This month is Parkinson's Awareness Month, a month when organizations from all around the world draw attention to Parkinson's disease. Parkinson's is a progressive brain disease for which there is no known cure, and it affects over 40,000 Ontarians.

The Parkinson Society seeks to ease the burden of people living with Parkinson's disease. In partnership with their three regional offices in Ontario and almost 100 chapters and support groups across the province, they are dedicated to providing support, education, research and advocacy on behalf of Canadians with Parkinson's.

Their chapters provide information to people with Parkinson's, their family members and their caregivers, as well as health professionals. They provide educational workshops, conferences, seminars, a toll-free national information and referral line, printed resources and supportive services. Across the province, events ranging from Parkinson's tulip sales and breakfasts to educational presentations and conferences are being held to raise awareness about Parkinson's disease.

Part of this awareness campaign involves the recognition that every Parkinson's experience is unique. The symptoms and progression vary from person to person, and living with Parkinson's requires a personal approach, which includes support for all aspects of a person's life. People living with Parkinson's and their caregivers and family members know that when your brain doesn't work properly, every part of your life is impacted. Living with Parkinson's also involves navigating complex health and

community service systems, engaging in difficult negotiations with employers and government agencies to meet financial needs, all the while dealing with a decline in self-sufficiency and adapting to a more prominent role for supportive care.

Parkinson's Awareness Month gives us the chance to look critically at how our current health care system in Ontario treats and supports Ontarians living with Parkinson's. Our current model of health, which is reactive and based on acute episodes of illness and treats each person with multiple health challenges as many different patients, is simply not adequate for the treatment of chronic diseases like Parkinson's. The shortcomings of this model of care will only be exacerbated as our baby boom population ages. Parkinson's is not a standard part of aging, but we know that the incidence does increase with age. More specifically, 85% of people diagnosed with Parkinson's are over 65. That age group will rise dramatically over the next 30 years, from around 11% to over 23%, meaning that we are going to face a significant increase in the number of people living with Parkinson's in the near future.

Given the complexity of this disease and the projected increase in prevalence, it's so important that we shift to a model of health care that is proactive and based on chronic disease management, health promotion and prevention, and recognizes the uniqueness of each patient's needs. This would involve having more personal choice and greater options for home care and community-based care, which would benefit people living with Parkinson's.

Part of this more patient-centred model of care should involve funding for places like, for example, the former Centre for Movement Disorders in Markham, Ontario, which used to provide multidisciplinary support for Parkinson's patients but was forced to close down last August when their funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care was cut off. This funding was cut despite strong evidence of the success of the clinic. Patients being treated by the clinic had, on average, their hospital stays reduced by three days, and a 10% reduction in long-term-care admissions compared to other patients in Ontario.

At the moment, Parkinson's wait times to see a neurologist range from one to three years. This is simply unacceptable, as patients need access to treatment and care immediately.

In honour of Parkinson's Awareness Month, I hope that the Minister of Health can take this opportunity to critically evaluate how care and support for Parkinson's patients is currently being delivered and, more importantly, look for ways that it can be improved and how wait times can be reduced.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to welcome all of our guests who have come here in support of Parkinson's Awareness Month.

A few of us have talked about the topic, that Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease. Movements that are usually controlled by dopamine, a chemical that carries signals between the nerves and the brain—when those

cells that normally produce dopamine die, the symptoms of Parkinson's appear. The most common symptoms are tremors—people say "shaking"—slowness and stiffness, impaired balance and rigidity of their muscles. Other symptoms can include fatigue, soft speech, problems with handwriting, stooped posture, constipation and sleep disturbances.

A diagnosis of Parkinson's can be very time-consuming. Usually, the patient will start to see a few tremors. They reach out to their family physician. The family physician will eventually transfer them to a neurologist, who will bring the diagnosis through a thorough physical examination and a lot of testing, basically, to make sure that the symptoms that the patient is showing are not due to something else.

Currently, there is no cure for Parkinson's. Once you have the disease—it is a chronic disease that people have to learn to manage, hopefully with help. But the good news is that people can live with the disease for many, many years. Most of the symptoms will be treated with medication. More recently, some people can benefit from some specific surgeries. A lot of therapies can also help manage the symptoms. Physical therapy helps with mobility, flexibility and balance. Occupational therapy will help with the activities of daily living. Speech therapy will help with voice control so that they can speak loud enough to be heard. Exercise helps the muscles and joints and improves the overall health and well-being of people who have Parkinson's disease.

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As has been said, Parkinson's progresses differently in everyone. There are no two the same.

The advocacy priorities for the Parkinson Society Canada are as follows. They want us to ask ourselves: Are we doing enough? What else could we do as MPPs, as members of this Legislature, to help people who have a diagnosis of Parkinson's?

The first thing we could do is to ensure timely access to affordable and effective therapy and diagnosis and help them access the health care system.

As Parkinson's disease progresses, they often will depend on caregivers. Here again, this Legislature could do a whole lot more to make sure that we support the caregivers who are supporting the people with Parkinson's.

Then they ask for genetic fairness protection to protect Canadians affected by the genetic condition including Parkinson's disease from the genetic discrimination that employers and certainly the insurance industry tends to do.

They also want us to support neurodegenerative research so that, by targeted investment, we can make sure that neuroscience continues to improve so that we will find a cure for Parkinson's.

Then, as with any other chronic disease, there's the issue of income. If it's a young person, and it's happening more and more that younger people get Parkinson's, they're often not able to carry on with work—no

work, no income. That becomes a huge barrier to the rest of their health and well-being.

They want neurological diseases to be recognized and addressed.

There is a number of good programs that have been funded by the Parkinson Society. They are advocating right now on behalf of 100,000 Canadians who live with Parkinson's. About half of them live in our province. They have been funding studies that have brought forward some very good ideas for us to move forward with and make the lives of people living with Parkinson's a bit easier, as well as keeping our eyes on the prize, the prize being finding a cure for this disease—the sooner, the better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a strong supporter of the Parkinson Society, I thank all members for their comments. My brother has been diagnosed. I can only tell you that the caregivers and the families deserve a tremendous amount of our respect and love and thanks.

### **PETITIONS**

#### PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

**Mr. John O'Toole:** This petition is prepared for stroke victims, from Jim McEwen, who is a member of my constituency. It's about post-stroke physiotherapy eligibility.

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens; and

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIPfunded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to pay for their treatment;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of Jim McEwen and Joy Smith and others and present it to page Urooj.

### RANKED BALLOTING

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, on June 11, 2013 Toronto city council passed a motion requesting a ranked ballot for municipal elections; and

"Whereas Bill 166 will strengthen local democracy within the city of Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014 which was introduced by Mitzie Hunter, MPP (Scarborough–Guildwood) and passed second reading on March 6, 2014."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Calvin.

## AIR QUALITY

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

"Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program's pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

"Whereas the Auditor General's No. 1 recommendation is for the government to 'formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I affix my signature in support.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Grant Crack:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families:

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and, there has been

a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia;

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer's;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but in 2013 they have yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day adjusted for acuity level and case mix:

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard of four hours:

"(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

"(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes."

I sign this petition and give it to Simon.

## **CYSTIC FIBROSIS**

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Madam Speaker, I know this is an issue dear to your heart, as Madi Vanstone goes to school in your riding and lives in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

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"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation:

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels and access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life;

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families."

I want to thank the good folks at the Streetsville Medical Centre for sending this to me.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act. 2014."

I fully support the petition and I will give my petition to Zohaib.

#### FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) is outdated, ineffective and the provincial government needs to conduct a review of the entire system;

"Whereas many families are either paying too much in child support or receiving too little, due to the ineffect-

iveness of the system;

"Whereas families are forced to become their own caseworkers to investigate information that is required by the Family Responsibility Office before they can enforce action;

"Whereas many of the federal and provincial databases do not link up, causing misinformation which affects the money paid or owed in child support for many families:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legisla-

tive Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the provincial government to strike an allparty supported select committee to conduct a review of the practices of the Family Responsibility Office to improve and streamline the collection of child support in the province of Ontario."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

#### CYSTIC FIBROSIS

**Mr. Todd Smith:** It's a pleasure to be able to present this petition on behalf of many, many residents in Prince Edward–Hastings.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis:

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels. For a CF patient with the specific G551D mutation, access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the over-

whelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families as it is to those in several countries including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Megan.

#### AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding postsecondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing

sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

Thank you. I will be signing this-

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Ajax-Pickering.

#### LCBO OUTLET

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I offer this petition in concert with my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

I agree with that, Madam Speaker, and I will so sign it and present it to Mira.

#### AIR QUALITY

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and "Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Calvin.

## LCBO OUTLET

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I want to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering to read this petition for me, brought by many businesses in Lindsay.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

I'll hand this over to page Anthony.

#### **DIABETES**

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

"Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

"Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

"Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Calvin.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCING PATIENT CARE AND PHARMACY SAFETY (STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT) ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LES SOINS AUX MALADES ET LA SÉCURITÉ DES PHARMACIES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to return to remark on Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act.

As I indicated on March 6, and this is really the fundamental flaw in this proposed legislation, Bill 117 changes some things with the process, but it does not alter what most people would agree is the most important thing. That is creating guidelines around the group purchasing organizations, or GPOs, that gave rise to chemotherapy underdosing incidents. The Minister of Health has endorsed all 12 of the recommendations contained within Dr. Thiessen's report, but this bill only directly addresses the last of his recommendations.

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In that report, Dr. Thiessen pointed out, "It is clear that the contractual elements and specifications surrounding the agreement between the GPO (Medbuy Corp.) and vendor are pivotal to the underdosing incident." The problem is not public-private arrangements as a mechanism and is more about the shoddy way in which the government has chosen to implement and oversee them. Even many Liberal supporters have to concede that the Ministry of Health has been sorely mismanaged and wounded by terrible PR under the Liberal government. This government outsources without oversight. When things go wrong, as is inevitably the case, they use the independence of the private sector partner to insulate themselves and sidestep responsibility. Then they bring forward a half-measure bill that doesn't really tackle the thorny issue that was at the heart of the crisis. They need to do better.

In his report, Dr. Thiessen also stated that "the mandate should address similar potential outcomes that might arise more broadly from non-sterile and sterile preparation practices, at any location." Again, in spite of supporting the findings contained within this report, and despite having expressed high regard for Dr. Thiessen's professional analysis, the minister has crafted legislation of narrow scope. The legislation in front of us today really only focuses on pharmacies. It addresses the need of standardizing the pharmacy operations, which in practice brings the greatest potential patient benefits and reduces some of the identified medication management risks. These details matter, and they matter a great deal.

Time and again throughout this story and throughout committee hearings, we came to understand and appreciate that failed communications were at the root of most of these problems. They can obviously have very serious side effects, especially when you are dealing in matters of life and death, as was the case here. This is why we entered the debate the way we do: broadly supportive of measures to make the system better but very disappointed in the limited scope of the bill. You don't need to think too long or too hard to come up with examples of the negative impact that botched communications can have on those who rely on a service or the front-line workers who do their best day in and day out to serve the public.

The government insists that the ballooning health care bureaucracy is necessary, but the public and even many health care workers are unconvinced. Of course, the Ombudsman has had tough and critical words for the non-transparent process that gave rise to the province's LHINs. That was part of the Liberals' massive rebranding of every corner of the public service, an exercise that resulted in organizations like eHealth and Ornge—at one time shiny new Liberal brands, since then tarred by waste and scandal. But despite overhauling the province's health care system stem to stern, despite all those bureaucrats and all those supposedly harmonized operations, some basic details escaped the government's attention.

Bill 117 is an opportunity to correct the government's lack of oversight.

In view of this, and in view of this bill's short title, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, it is regrettable that the government has not included in this bill a measure that would expand the scope of the Ombudsman's powers of investigation so that he is able to look into complaints around our health care system when appropriate. The recently proposed Accountability Act suggests why this is the case. That bill would expand the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to include most of the socalled MUSH sector, after years of denying opposition attempts to do the same. But significantly, the one area left out of the equation appears to be health care. That bill proposes a half-measure for the health care sector, some sort of ombudsman mechanism that comes across as a kind of Ombudsman lite; in other words, a PR tool that allows the government to talk about independent oversight, transparency and accountability without having the bother of fully committing to those things.

As we know, the health care sector deals in matters of life and death. It is central to our quality of life and our trust in government. It commands vast sums of money, over 40% of the budget. In light of all of this, I cannot fathom why this government continues to resist true transparency and accountability. These things are not contrary to the goals of our health care system; they are complementary.

I would urge the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to revisit this bill at committee and strengthen it, not only with the fullness of Dr. Thiessen's recommendations and not only with the perspective and conclusions of the Standing Committee on Social Policy with regard to oversight of pharmaceutical companies, but also to correct an omission and to grant the Ontario Ombudsman the power to make our health care system fully accountable.

Again, in light of how fundamental trust is to the entire health care sector, I'm not sure why the government continues to try and control the flow of information. This is why you hear a strong note of disappointment from speakers on this side of the House when it comes to debating a bill such as this. With all the vast resources and expertise at her disposal, you would hope that the minister would be bringing forward solid, substantial legislation that was a little more ambitious. It is not enough to suggest that the critical details will be dealt with later through regulation—not nearly enough. A major part of aspiring to have the best health care in the world is setting higher standards for transparency and accountability and holding to those standards.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I had a chance to listen to the comments of the member for Burlington. I just want to put on the record that I listened carefully to her speech.

I think with the act in front of us, we are enhancing patient care and pharmacy safety. We've adopted 11 of the 12 recommendations put forward by Dr. Thiessen. This bill in front of us today addresses the 12th recommendation. So we're responding directly to the third party, Dr. Thiessen, who was put forward to review what had happened with regard to the diluted treatment for chemotherapy. It's pretty straightforward. The bill is a very small bill. We're trying to implement all the recommendations of Dr. Thiessen.

I'm happy to hear and be able to comment briefly on the comments from the member from Burlington.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Durham.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I did listen to the truncated speech by the member from Burlington. It was started on March 6 and just ended today.

A little history on this bill: It's an eight-page bill. It's a bill that we support going to committee, as has been mentioned by the member from Burlington, and is in response to a special report issued by Dr. Thiessen with 12 recommendations in it.

I thought one of the most powerful statements she made was that they fail to manage anything they outsource. She suggested that the failing-to-manage part of it was unintentional, but I believe it's intentional. They just throw it out there like they have with the LHINs and the CCACs and other groups. Today in the House, the social policy committee, under the capable stewardship of the member from Oxford, filed a report dealing with the mess-up with the chemotherapy medication being underdosed. It's another example of a government that fails to manage. We're seeing that in the House daily here—more recently under the gas plant scandal becoming—it's almost a cover-up, really. But the OPP are investigating it, so I'll let that be as it is.

1600

I commend the member for bringing it to the attention, and some of the points that she made with reference to the underdosing but also to the Thiessen report, which I think members, if they're listening to the debate this afternoon—again, it's not too much. When I look at the final part of the bill, it says that the person who "resigns, or voluntarily relinquishes or restricts his or her privileges"—there's a duty on the hospital—in these cases, mostly it's a hospital—to notify the college of that profession, given that it potentially could be a pharmacist.

I know that our member Mr. Yurek, who is a pharmacist, spoke on this bill back in, I think, October or November 2013.

There's a lot more to be done on this bill, and the comments from the member from Burlington were very appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks very much for giving me an opportunity to talk on this important bill.

It's really sad when you see the number of people who died here, 1,202, and 40 of them were children. We don't know how many others would have died if it wasn't for the Peterborough hospital's cancer treatment centre. The person who found it—he might have been very timid, but I would say he was diligent. A pharmacy technician picked up on the fact that the bag that he had in front of him was not concentration-specific. The task he had to do that day was prepare medication for a client. He ended up finding out that it was a woman of a certain-sized body. In order to do this, he needed this bag to be concentrationspecific. Unfortunately, it was not. Then the whole thing unravelled. We owe this very timid and diligent pharmacy technician in Peterborough a great deal of respect for what he has done. Then he brought it up to the chain of command, and we were able to trace it back.

So here we are again today, talking about Bill 117 that the minister put forward to reassure Ontarians that what happened would never and should never happen again. But there's nothing in this bill that talks about group purchasing organizations. The bill in itself is pretty sound. What we're trying to do is legislate a change in the oversight of the hospital purchasing policy and give some regulatory college—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for comment has ended.

Comments or questions?

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I'm proud to stand up and add some more comments to the member from Burlington's comments earlier, which were highly intelligent and very straightforward.

Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act: I think we really and truly have to look at what's missing in this bill, and that is how GPOs in this province are regulated and controlled—or, should I say, the lack thereof. For instance, GPOs are consistently achieving savings for the hospitals by receiving rebates from companies wanting to sell to hospitals. However, when you look at the financial data that we are able to get from the GPOs, a lot of that money that they say they've saved Ontarians is not in the financial structure of their statements. So we're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars that are unaccounted for. Maybe they are going to the right thing. Maybe they are going to patient education. Maybe they're going to ensure that we can hire the extra nurse. Maybe it's going to ensure that some capital costs are taken care of. However, the people of Ontario don't know exactly where this money is going, how it's collected and who is benefiting from these alleged savings.

I think where the minister missed the mark on this—there are quite a few, which I did talk about in my leadoff speech. However, I do want to take concern that more information has to be researched into where this money from the GPOs is coming from, where it's going and how it's accounted for. People of this province need transparency. We know that this government has failed on transparency. We've seen it day in and day out—especially with the recent gas plant erased email statements from the OPP—that things aren't getting better in this province; they're getting worse. The government has missed the mark on another accountability and transparency part of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We'll return to the member for Burlington for two minutes.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest, the member from Durham, the member from Niagara Falls and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. Again, Speaker, I have been pleased to take part in this debate, and for my two-minute roundup.

As I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, nearly a month ago, last spring I served as part of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, which was given the responsibility of looking into oversight of pharmaceutical companies. As I said then, and again earlier this afternoon, the concern that we spent so much time trying to unravel at the heart of those hearings was something that, sadly, we do not see in Bill 117. This omission is critically important.

I am prepared to support this bill as a piece of generic legislation that strengthens our health care system, but I am disappointed that Bill 117 fails to act where action is needed most urgently, specifically with regard to creating guidelines around group purchasing organizations that were pivotal to the underdosing incident. If Bill 117 was

enacted as it stands today, it would not stop underdosing incidents.

If there is anything that will improve and enhance Ontario's hospital drug supply system and enhance patient safety, as legislators, we should be working tirelessly towards that goal.

The Minister of Health says she is aware of the gravity of this situation, but Bill 117 offers thin proof of that. This government has the benefit of hindsight, and that only heightens its responsibility to act responsibly and to do everything it can to make sure that history does not repeat itself.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just on a point of privilege.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to clarify my comment in my two-minute—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's actually a point of order.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I said that 1,202, including 40 children, died from this. It was that they received a dosage. I apologize for that. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is an honour for me to rise today to speak on behalf of the people I represent in London West. But it is also with sadness, and, yes, anger, that I join this debate on Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, because, as members of this assembly may already be aware, no other community in this province was as directly affected by chemotherapy underdosing as was my community of London, Ontario. No other community in this province has such a personal stake in ensuring that the mistakes that were made never happen again.

Of the 1,200 Ontarians who were treated with diluted chemotherapy drugs, more than half—almost 700 men, women and children—were patients at the London Health Sciences Centre. Tragically, 117 of those London cancer patients died, and the families from my community who lost their loved ones can't help but wonder if lives could have been prolonged if only they had received the right doses of their chemotherapy drugs. That hits home, and it speaks to the very heart of why we need to do everything we can, as legislators, to make sure that the mistakes that happened between February 2012 and March 2013 are never repeated.

Bill 117 is a start to putting the necessary regulatory and legislative protections in place to prevent another chemotherapy drug tragedy. I want to say, on behalf of my caucus, that we support this bill and will be voting to move the legislation through second reading and on to committee.

#### 1610

Essentially, Bill 117 consists of two parts. The first part of the bill expands the authority of the Ontario College of Pharmacists to cover hospital pharmacies and institutional pharmacies such as in correctional facilities and long-term-care homes—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Point of order, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): A point of order.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but I do not believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Would you check for a quorum, please?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I go back to the member for London West.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London West, you have the floor.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Bill 117 is a start to putting the necessary regulatory and legislative protections in place to prevent another chemotherapy drug tragedy. I want to say on behalf of my caucus that we support the bill and will be voting to move the legislation through second reading and on to committee.

Essentially, Bill 117 consists of two parts. The first part of the bill expands the authority of the Ontario College of Pharmacists to cover hospital pharmacies and institutional pharmacies such as in correctional facilities and long-term-care homes, as well as the community pharmacies they currently regulate. The second part of the bill amends the roles and responsibilities of the 27 regulatory bodies established under the Regulated Health Professions Act that govern the practices and professionalism of a broad range of health care providers.

It is the first part of the legislation—the part dealing with the Ontario College of Pharmacists—that offers a legislative response to the chemotherapy drug tragedy. The second part of Bill 117 has nothing to do with chemotherapy drugs. Instead, it makes changes to enable the regulatory health colleges to do a better job of protecting the public from incompetent or unqualified health care providers. While we don't have any problem with these provisions of the bill—better protection for the public is always a good thing—it's clear that the government's decision to introduce this legislation was largely in response to the chemotherapy drug scandal.

It was just about a year ago that Ontarians learned that 1,200 cancer patients at four Ontario hospitals, including the London Health Sciences Centre in my community, had been receiving diluted chemotherapy drugs over a period of about 13 months. Each of these patients received a lower dosage of chemotherapy than their doctors had prescribed, anywhere from 3% to 20% less.

It is due to the diligence and quick action of a couple of pharmacy assistants at Peterborough Regional Health Centre that this underdosing was discovered. These observant and quick-witted health professionals noticed that something was incorrect with the chemotherapy drugs that they were preparing to use. We have these individuals, who were just doing their jobs when they realized that something wasn't making sense, to thank for putting an end to the chemotherapy underdosing that had been going on for months without anyone noticing.

Ontarians across the province were left to face the devastating consequences of this chemotherapy treatment mistake. In my community, the cancer patients who were

affected included 651 adults and 40 children.

A family member of one of those cancer patients, London resident Kristine Allison, contacted my colleague the MPP for London–Fanshawe last April. Kristine's fiancé passed away after receiving diluted chemotherapy drugs at London Health Sciences Centre. As you can imagine, Kristine was shocked and distressed when she learned about the lack of oversight and the absence of any quality assurance for the drugs that patients were receiving.

During the summer before I was elected, I also met with Kristine, along with the MPP from London–Fanshawe and the NDP leader, Andrea Horwath. We assured her that we would do everything possible to prevent another family from going through the situation she was going through. Kristine's story, like many others, is a tragic reminder of the need for greater oversight over

our health care sector. Another London Health Sciences Centre patient, Virginia Offen, has been battling cancer since her diagnosis in 2000. Virginia also received diluted chemotherapy treatments at the London Health Sciences Centre and spoke publicly in the media about the devastation and betrayal she feels because of the government's failure to oversee dosages of chemotherapy drugs. It has made her lose faith in our health care system. I speak for all members of our caucus and, I think, all members of this Legislature in recognizing our collective responsibility to Kristine and to Virginia and to all the others who were affected. That is why, as I have already stated, our caucus will be supporting this bill. We need to put strong measures in place, strong systems oversight, to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

That being said, however, my New Democrat colleagues and I have some concerns about this bill, which I will speak to in more detail during my comments today.

First of all, the fact that this bill is being introduced at this time is, quite frankly, perplexing. MPPs empowered a committee of the Legislature, the Standing Committee on Social Policy, to conduct an exhaustive, detailed investigation into the diluted chemotherapy drug scandal. The committee met many times, and has heard from dozens of witnesses. It has spent countless hours listening to witnesses and asking pointed questions. The committee researcher worked hard to synthesize the information and prepare a comprehensive report so that members of the committee could develop the most informed and educated recommendations possible.

But we are only learning today what those final recommendations include, because the committee only

just this afternoon released its report and tabled it with MPPs. So the timing of this bill is somewhat puzzling. Waiting until the committee's report was made public before introducing the bill would have ensured that the legislation was informed by as much information as possible. So I'm glad that we will have the committee's recommendations before us when this bill is referred to the next step of the legislative process, but it would have been helpful to have those vital recommendations available from the beginning.

I would also like to draw MPPs' attention to an issue that was highlighted by my colleague the member for Nickel Belt when she spoke to the bill during her leadoff speech. This is the critical fact that the bill does not deal with the structure of group purchasing organizations, or

**GPOs** 

It is the structure of and lack of oversight over GPOs that led to the diluted chemotherapy drugs in the first place. This was pointed out during the presentation to the standing committee by Dr. Jake Thiessen, the highly respected expert who is a University of Waterloo faculty member and was appointed by the government to conduct an independent review of quality assurance within Ontario's cancer drug supply chain. Although Dr. Thiessen's mandate did not include making recommendations about the safe supply of drugs in general, he did include a number of recommendations about group purchasing organizations. As we now know, thanks to the work of Dr. Thiessen, this tragic mistake that affected so many people in this province was not because of mistakes made at Ontario hospitals or cancer treatment centres; it was because of mistakes made during the tendering process by the group purchasing organization.

For clarification purposes: Hospitals often contract out purchasing to GPOs, who put out a tender to get the best price possible for supplies; in this case, chemotherapy drugs. What happened over those months from February 2012 to March 2013 was that the GPO, Medbuy, selected Marchese Hospital Solutions as the supplier of two specific cancer drugs. While the hospital's instructions clearly stated that they wanted to purchase concentration-specific chemotherapy drugs, none of the 11 pharmacists at Medbuy picked up on this fact, with the result that the diluted chemotherapy drugs were given to 1,200 patients across the province, with tragic consequences.

The problem is that Medbuy and other GPOs operate in a grey area and, as such, are not subject to government regulation. If GPOs are making important decisions such as deciding which companies, like Marchese, receive government contracts, New Democrats believe that they must be regulated. In fact, Dr. Thiessen, one of the leading experts in his field, agreed with my colleague the MPP for Nickel Belt that some kind of infrastructure to provide oversight of GPOs was worth considering.

Unfortunately, however, Bill 117 does nothing to deal with the huge gap in regulation related to GPOs. It leaves me and my colleagues in the NDP wondering if this bill is really intended to deal with the most important issue at hand. The fact that this bill introduces more regulation

into an already highly regulated environment but does not look into the structure of a private organization that is tasked with something as fundamental as chemotherapy drug supply is deeply troubling.

1620

While regulating hospital pharmacies and institutional pharmacies is welcome and is something that is already being done in other jurisdictions, I am concerned that the bill is not doing enough to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again. It is our duty to make sure thatwee are doing everything in our power to protect patients in Ontario from such mistakes in the future.

There is clearly a need for oversight over GPOs, and it is unfortunate that this bill does not take steps to put an oversight mechanism in place. As my colleague the MPP for Nickel Belt previously mentioned, more oversight is always welcome. However, this bill does not address the question of what is needed to prevent a similar fiasco from happening in the future. The lack of a plan for oversight over GPOs may reflect the rushed nature of the introduction of the bill, before the social policy committee had released its final report with recommendations that are grounded in the evidence heard by the committee.

Another concern that I would like to raise during my time today deals with the unclear timeline of implementation of different aspects of this bill. We know that regulation by the Ontario College of Pharmacists will require many hospitals to implement significant changes and upgrades,, since hospital pharmacies have never had that level of oversight before. There is no doubt that this will be a lengthy and potentially costly process. These impacts will be felt more significantly by smaller hospitals, which face significant budget constraints. It is important that we have a clear timeline on the process and costs of the accreditation process for hospital pharmacies.

Before closing, I want to briefly address the second part of this bill, which, as I indicated earlier, has very little to do with diluted chemotherapy drugs. The second part of Bill 117 deals with the 27 colleges that regulate health professionals, and it proposes amendments to strengthen the ability of these colleges to protect the public. Although the addition of these amendments has nothing to do with the major issue at hand, my colleagues and I are committed to supporting this legislation, and I welcome the new protections included under Bill 117.

The bill will enhance mandatory reporting from hospitals to colleges about professional misconduct or potential incompetence. I know that this is something that people have been concerned about for some time. Mandatory reporting will help ensure that any changes to privileges made by hospital boards because of concerns about competence or quality of care will be reported back to the college. This obviously will further help to ensure that patients are receiving the best and safest treatment possible.

Another important aspect of the proposed amendments is that the regulatory colleges will be able to share

information with hospitals about any disciplinary actions that they choose to take against a member. My colleagues and I believe that this change is beneficial to patients and will help ensure that the people of Ontario are protected. These changes have been a long time coming and have the full support of our caucus.

In closing, I'm happy to say that my New Democrat colleagues and I will be supporting this bill, as it is an important first step. However, the lack of oversight of group purchasing organizations remains a significant problem, a problem that this bill does not address in any capacity. In fact, the lack of oversight of GPOs is essentially what led to the mistake of diluted chemotherapy drugs being given to cancer patients in this province. I am not confident that this bill will stop a similar fiasco from happening again. It is deeply troubling that people in my community of London and those across the province continue to face similar risks due to lack of oversight. Simply put, it is obvious that more work needs to be done—much more work. I welcome the input that will be provided as this legislation moves forward through the committee process.

It would also have been beneficial if the minister had waited until the social policy committee had finalized its comprehensive report on the diluted chemotherapy drugs before bringing this bill forward. Waiting for the report to be released would have ensured that any legislation brought forward would have been evidence-based and fact-driven.

I look forward to further debate on this bill and hope that the minister will address some of the concerns that I have identified here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

**Mr. Grant Crack:** I'd like to thank the member from London West for all her comments.

Bill 117 is a result of extensive consultations after what was experienced last year, and we'd like to thank Dr. Thiessen for his recommendations. This piece of legislation directly responds to one of his recommendations, actually; the 12th one.

Part of this legislation is to strengthen patient care and ensure patient safety. What we're going to be doing with this piece of legislation is to give the College of Pharmacists oversight of drug compounding facilities. It will require hospitals to purchase drugs from these accredited facilities.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care took swift action when we first discovered what was taking place. I'd like to also, on behalf of government, thank hospital staff and everyone who was involved, for removing the drugs from the shelves. They worked around the clock. They identified and contacted and made arrangements with oncologists to make sure that all the affected patients had been made aware and appropriate action was taken.

The minister, as I said, took swift action, but also responsible action. She also convened a working group with all the organizations who share responsibility on this issue, and to coordinate a response. This is something that happened that is something that we have to ensure never happens again. That's why, as I mentioned earlier, this piece of legislation is before us. I think it's important that we continue to debate it and, more importantly, get it into committee so that we can improve upon it and take some of the suggestions that have been made and bring it back for third reading to ensure that this never happens again, as I said. But rest assured that we, as a government, will continue to be a leader in cancer care across this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

**Mr. Todd Smith:** It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions.

I rise to add some comments to the presentation made by the member from London West, who obviously felt the impact of this in her home community. I thought her comments were very well thought out. She actually had a number of questions, during her presentation, of the minister and this government on why the legislation was brought forward, perhaps a little bit too swiftly, before the committee had actually made its recommendations. There are some recommendations in there from Dr. Thiessen's report, and those are good. I would like to point out that the PC caucus is also in support of this legislation going forward to committee and making some changes.

There are many questions about the group purchasing organization. It's interesting how the Minister of Health likes to use this GPO to not fund certain drugs at certain times, and she'll hide behind waiting for this. I believe that the answer to the question that the member from London West asked, and that is, "I don't know why the minister would have brought out this piece of legislation prematurely, when the committee was waiting"—I would assume it probably was to divert attention away from one of the many scandals that this government has been embroiled in, and there are so many. But I believe that's probably one of the reasons why this legislation was brought out maybe a little bit prematurely.

This was a serious issue affecting 1,200 patients at four different hospitals. Thank God for the people in Peterborough who uncovered this, and the good work that they did in Peterborough to bring this to light. There are still many questions that have to be answered, and the member from London West raised a number of them in her presentation, which I thought was very good.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from London West for her research and good comments that she brought forward today.

Certainly there are some weak areas of this bill. I've seen a lot over a few years. I've seen bills brought forward when it's johnny-come-lately—they always bring forward after some incident or something happens.

You've got Ornge, you've got eHealth, you've got all these things, but it all points back to the same ministry and the same leadership, which is non-existent, because every time we have a problem in here, it's later than it should have been.

#### 1630

These people who are affected by this—this is outrageous. Where is the inspection? Where is the ongoing accountability? Where was it? Sure, they can bring this bill forward, but it all boils down to things I've seen in here over the years and in my former municipal life. I have seen bills brought forward on the environment, and what happens? The government never backs it up. The government never enforces it. The government never fines anyone. The government just makes it nice and puts out a nice little package, but they don't follow it up. If you don't enforce your own laws, if you don't go after the people who are committing these mistakes, then they're going to continue to happen.

Every week, it's something new. What's wrong with this picture? The picture is, there is not enough involvement by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. There's not enough of this ministry involved in the local hospitals. They created the LHINs to deflect the trouble from this building onto the municipalities. That's why they did it. Now I've got one that's the head of 221 agencies in my area—one LHIN. It's not doing the job. It's not working. There's no appeal body. There's no one to bring your grievances forward to.

It's absolutely disorganized and, once again, johnny-come-lately.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will do my best to respond to some of the remarks that have been made. It's interesting, often we're criticized for not moving early enough; now we're criticized for moving too early. I can tell you that this legislation was introduced last October based on the advice of Dr. Thiessen. This was an incident that everyone agrees—everyone agrees—should never have happened. But it did happen, and because we pulled together the right people to understand why it happened, we want to ensure it will never happen again.

So we asked Dr. Thiessen to really give us insight into what needed to be done to ensure that this doesn't happen again. We accept and endorse all of those recommendations, and we're implementing 11 of the 12 recommendations. This legislation responds to the 12th recommendation. So we are in complete alignment with what Dr. Thiessen revealed to us that needed to change.

I can assure the members of this House that we need to get this passed. Let's get it past second reading. Let's get it into committee. I know there are things that some members may want to include in this legislation. That's the work of government. This is not a partisan effort. All of us agree that what happened should not have happened, and we have a duty, collectively, to ensure that it does not happen again. That's exactly what this is.

Let's bring this to committee. Let's roll up our sleeves. Let's get it done. The patients of this province are counting on us to pass this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London West has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the Minister of Health for their comments on my remarks.

There were a couple of things said that I think are important and worth repeating. Certainly, the bill does include the recommendations from Dr. Thiessen's report. This is important. We're leveraging the expertise that we engaged to conduct that independent review.

We don't know how the legislation stands in terms of the recommendations from the social policy committee's work, because that report was only tabled less than an hour ago in this Legislature. We haven't had an opportunity to look at those recommendations and see how those recommendations align with the bill and how those recommendations could inform the bill going forward.

Another point I wanted to make—I wanted to thank the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for acknowledging the work that was done by the hospital staff to immediately remove those drugs and take swift action. As we know from the investigation, the mistakes that occurred were not mistakes of hospital professionals. The mistakes were made in the supply chain process, and the mistakes were made by the GPOs.

But ultimately that is what is our major concern about the legislation: that the bill may only offer half measures in terms of preventing a similar tragedy because it does not address the need for oversight over GPOs. So we look forward to seeing it move to committee so it can be strengthened and improved.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Further debate?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just giving time, if there was anyone on the government side who might stand to debate, but I guess not.

Bill 117 is what we're debating here this afternoon, which is the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act. I'd like to commend my colleagues who have spoken before on this bill, certainly from the Progressive Conservative side: our health critic, Christine Elliott, from Whitby-Oshawa, and also the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who is my seatmate here and is actually a pharmacist. It's always kind of handy to have the drug person around to explain the technical aspects of what we're discussing today.

I have a little bit of familiarity with this, being a nurse. I have certainly seen the process of administering drugs and mixing a lot. I can't say that I have been involved in mixing any of the cancer care drugs to a great extent. But you have to be very careful, and I think that's what we're talking about today: taking appropriate measures to strengthen the safety of the province's hospital drug

supply system, thus further enhancing patient care and also patient safety.

The case example used by many of the speakers refers to the front-line workers at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. They were the ones who discovered the occurrence of underdosing. Peterborough Regional Health Centre is close to Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock-I take in pieces of Peterborough county-and that is one of our regional referral centres for the area. So we're quite proud of the fact that they were quite detailed in understanding where the mixture had come from—a different supplier—and understanding the volumes. I'll get into that a little bit later. I just want to commend those people. It was March 2013 when they discovered this case that came before us where the chemo drugs were not being appropriately given, in the right dilution. It has uncovered all these problems, which is why this bill is before us today.

More than 1,000 cancer patients across the province were receiving the watered-down chemo drugs. They had noticed at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre that the label on the new IV bag from Marchese, the one supplier, wasn't labelled in the same way that the previous solutions had been after they had recently run out of their supply of bags from the previous vendor, supplier, and were switching bags. The difference in labelling caused concern about how they should be administering this drug, since the dosage instructions were unclear on the new bags, and they were now required to refrigerate this drug, when they hadn't had to do that for the previous batch from another supplier. You've always got to keep your thoughts going and say, "Why is this different? Why am I doing this differently now?" Again, I praise those front-line health care workers who discovered this.

The new bags' label did not contain enough information for the pharmacy assistant to actually mix the patient's dose. After calling colleagues and the company for answers, doing her due diligence, they discovered that the drug was diluted and immediately brought it to the attention of authorities.

Most people have been in a hospital before. You see the big bags which are one-litre bags, and you see small medication bags, which we call the 100-millilitre bags. The problem occurs, and we have to watch that, in that the bags are usually a little overfilled. The different manufacturers have different reasons, but that's just what occurs in the industry. We all kind of know it's maybe 107 millilitres, not 100 millilitres, or it might be 110 millilitres. A 250-millilitre bag might be 260 millilitres, or cc's, for those who know that measurement.

The two drugs that were involved were—I'll try to pronounce this correctly from my nursing days—gemcitabine was, on average, diluted about 7%, and the cyclophosphamide about 10%. That is the difference in the dosage that occurred that was brought to light in 2013—thus, the rollout of what we should do. Again, that's why we need more controls. Unfortunately, these things do have to happen.

My pharmacist friend is beside me now, so he'll correct anything that I may be saying that's incorrect with these details.

It was discovered that the drugs, as I said, were watered down by 10% or 7% respectively. The excess amount of saline solution was not accounted for by the hospitals because the bag labels did not indicate an overfill.

The report that was released did not fault Marchese, because it said that the company's contract with Medbuy—again, these are manufacturers' names—only required the bags to be labelled with the amount of active drugs inside rather than their concentration.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: GPOs.

**Ms.** Laurie Scott: Which is the GPO, as my friend has said beside me. It has been brought up a lot within this debate.

The chemotherapy drugs used to be mixed right in the hospital—it was patient-specific—but many have now been outsourced. Two entities known as GPOs, which are the group purchasing organizations like Medbuy that I just mentioned, then contract with drug-mixing companies.

Now that drugs are supplied by a bulk purchasing agent for the hospital, Peterborough hospital CEO Ken Tremblay acknowledged that they have no say in how the drugs are procured for its patients. Supplying chemotherapy drugs from an outside source means that there needs to be more oversight and regulation in order to ensure that this mistake does not happen again.

Again, a lot of this boils down to communications. Isn't that true in life? People and communication: You have to talk with each other. When people enter the hospital, or our health care system in general, they put their lives in the hands of our system and our health care professionals. We need to provide the proper standards and regulations in place to ensure that the patients get the care they need and deserve.

In good news, only one patient in the Peterborough area was exposed to the diluted chemo drugs.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: One too many.

Ms. Laurie Scott: For sure. One is one too many; there's no question. That was my next line. Thank you. But over 1,200 people received underdosed chemotherapy. Lakeridge Health, another referral centre for us up in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, had 37 incidents. London Health Sciences Centre had 691, Windsor Regional Hospital had 290, and here was another province involved with this, which is New Brunswick.

Dr. Thiessen—Thiessen?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thiessen.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I pronounced it right?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Excellent.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Dr. Thiessen, who the minister had mentioned, was brought in, and certainly commended the health care workers for their alertness with that. If I can quote him, his report points out "that the entire health care community needs to work together to ensure that no patients ever endure such an experience again. We are

pleased that the report validated our past statements and testimony, and we look forward to implementing the recommendations that relate to Marchese"—that was from Marchese Health Solutions. Again, it's communications. It's working together. In health care, of course, it's very critical that that happens.

Currently, hospital pharmacies are the responsibility of individual hospital corporations. The Ontario College of Pharmacists currently oversees and inspects community pharmacies. Expanding the Ontario College of Pharmacists' authority to oversee hospital pharmacies will ensure that the community and hospital pharmacies meet consistent standards and, again, work together.

Early in 2013, Dr. Thiessen conducted the detailed investigation into the discovery of the underdosed chemotherapy drugs at the four Ontario hospitals I mentioned, and the one in New Brunswick. He provided a list of 12 recommendations. I say that again; it has been brought up a lot in this debate: 12 recommendations.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Twelve.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes. But our main concern is that it only addresses one of these recommendations. This bill before us today only addresses one.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Are we going to get 12 bills on this?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes, it would be nice if the government could streamline some action-packed bills that actually take a large chunk of the problems and solve them, not just one.

Anyway, his report is entitled A Review of the Oncology Under-Dosing Incident, for those at home who would like to go and see the other recommendations. The release of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care then states, despite its only one recommendation, that the "government is following through on its commitment to implement the recommendations"—really, it isn't. It's only one recommendation of 12. It says, "The OCP shall license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's clinics or hospitals."

It would provide the Ontario College of Pharmacists with the authority to accredit and inspect pharmacies within public and private hospitals in the same manner it currently accredits and inspects community pharmacies. This is important as it brings a level of inspection and regulation under the same umbrella and ensures that all pharmacies, whether public or private, are held to the same standards.

This change does not fully accept the recommendation made by Dr. Thiessen since he stated in his report that "the mandate should address similar potential outcomes that might arise more broadly from non-sterile and sterile preparation practices, at any location." This legislation, again, only focuses on pharmacies, which excludes a number of other practices that should also fall under the mandate, according to this recommendation.

This act would give the Ontario College of Pharmacists the ability to enforce accreditation requirements, as well as making regulations and bylaws to establish the requirements and standards for accreditation. Considering the importance of pharmacists within the province of

Ontario and its health care system, it's imperative that they are properly accredited since residents trust these individuals to be properly trained and experienced in their position. I know that pharmacists in my riding are many times the front line, first access to health care that we have.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: They still are.

Ms. Laurie Scott: And they still are, no question about it. They play a huge role that I don't think was widely known until recently, or widely appreciated.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I knew.

Ms. Laurie Scott: And of course my pharmacist seatmate here from Elgin–Middlesex–London knew, that's why he got into politics, I think, Madam Speaker. As a pharmacist, all the legislation that he didn't think was very correct from the current government—so he did a great thing. He said, "Let me put my name on the ballot and let me get in and be a pharmacist," which is good. We value that the Minister of Health is not in your head. It's a good resource to have a pharmacist in the chamber.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Couldn't agree more.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, couldn't agree more.

**Interjection:** How about a doctor?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Just like it's kind of handy to have a nurse around sometimes or a doctor around sometimes. So it's good to have a nurse around—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes.

In this situation, when this terrible incident did occur—in all the papers, front-page news—we went directly to our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek, to say, "Wow. Interpret a little bit here what happened for us," and he ended up interpreting quite a lot. In fact, the report was submitted from committee today, of which he was a part, that delved into this incident specifically—that report was just presented less than an hour ago. We appreciate his professional input on that, and all committee members, if I can say that, from all sides did appreciate that—and I believe Dr. Jaczek was on that committee also. It's good when we actually have our backgrounds before we come to this Legislature that we can utilize in some degree.

We're going to be supporting Bill 117. It does not mean that we do not have concerns, because it's good to have questions—you know, even kids say, "Why? Why?" We do that in opposition; that's our role—why, why and why? And we've got to make sure we get it right. It's important that we continue to have questions. We support this bill. But, as I said, that's one of 12 recommendations.

On this side of the House, the Progressive Conservatives have developed many white papers which outline paths to prosperity for the citizens of Ontario, and in one of our white papers called, "A Healthier Ontario," we provide many recommendations for improving care in Ontario—in detail again, but if anyone cares to go on the website and look that up, path 13 actually outlines a similar model to the one recommended by Dr. Thiessen that is not covered by the bill.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We were ahead of the curve. What can I say?

Recommendation 12 calls for "specialized electronic records and label requirements for non-sterile product preparation within a hospital pharmacy." In addition, all hospital pharmacy labels would have to comply with a comprehensive bar-coded identification for all products in all patients.

It's time to modernize the system. They have tried many times with eHealth—I think we're up to \$2 billion. I don't know how far ahead we are in our electronic health system, but it's incredibly valuable. I think most people who are listening or are in the chamber know what bar codes are now. We have to move into that century with our patient care.

1650

Another topic, in path 13 in the white paper, suggests we should deliver the electronic records that are mission-critical for better-quality health care. That's what we've been saying. We say that the government spent almost \$2 billion in not getting eHealth records right. We say that the eHealth initiative should be in the hands of the hospitals and doctors who actually use the health records.

You say "health records," and eyes glaze over and stuff. I'm telling you: Proper information saves lives. My pharmacist friends know that. I know that. You have to have a better system. I think we're probably the only province that doesn't have an adequate eHealth recording system.

This part of electronic labelling in health records would allow easier access by doctors and pharmacists and ensure—no question—better quality of service and health for individuals and, for sure, save lives. It's the information. It's simple math that we spoke about before. Dilutions—it's all things that need to be co-ordinated.

We're saying that all of our steps or our paths that we've laid out—the government always wants ideas, and we have so many ideas for them. I don't know if they've stopped listening or they never really were listening, but anyway, those are two ideas that we've put forward as a party that will ensure that all records in Ontario are easily accessible for all different parts of the health system, including family doctors, hospitals, pharmacists and specialists.

It's all communications, but it saves lives. So let's get it right. Some \$2 billion was wasted on an eHealth records system that I don't have any proof is actually working.

While we still do have concerns, as I said, about the bill, it's good to know that the Liberal government—

**Interjection:** Will soon be defeated?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, it could change. We might actually be able to implement the 12 recommendations instead of one of Dr. Thiessen's, as promised. I guess in the slow, snail pace of the government, this is as far as we're getting for the moment. He had other recommendations, and I have a few minutes and I'll touch on a couple of them.

The second recommendation has been discussed a lot here. That was that, "Every GPO"—that's the group purchasing organization—"shall review its procurement process to ensure that risk for patients is considered an essential evaluation and adjudication criterion when considering proposals." That's a good idea.

We've had discussion here today. My colleague is more of an authority on it, but group purchasing organizations actually save hospitals money. They have bigger buying power. It makes sense. They create the bags of chemotherapy drugs in this situation, and they buy them, because when you're in a hospital setting and if you have to mix these chemo drugs—and I have done a few, but it has been a long time—you have to wait for dilution. It's no question that it takes a lot of time from a busy nurse's schedule or pharmacist's schedule, so it makes sense that there's a private partnership. There are companies that go out there that pre-mix these bags, and the big buying organizations for the hospitals get a better deal. It saves money. We all like to see that.

What we're concerned about and what my colleague has brought up many times is: Where are the savings going? I guess I can call them kickbacks; other people have today.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Rebates.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Rebates is what they're called. We're missing—I think there was about \$250 million in rebates that we think—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Just a roundabout figure.

Ms. Laurie Scott: A roundabout figure; we haven't figured it out yet, and only about \$60 million really accounted for. We're looking at hospitals. Budgets have been frozen. We know we have to change the approach to health care, but we're saying, "Okay, so they've all gone out and they've decided to buy in bulk, which saves money for whatever it is." In this case, we're talking chemo drugs. But there's no actual trail of accountability of where the savings are going back to. Are they going back to the hospital? Where is it in the system? All good questions. As I said, that's addressed in Dr. Thiessen's second recommendation: that there has to be more accountability for these transactions that are going on and where the money goes for the savings that apparently are occurring. We have a roundabout figure but are not sure where they've done the savings.

His third point was that, "Every GPO shall develop and adopt a standardized product and/or service specification description that outlines the requirements for contracted sterile or non-sterile pharmaceutical preparation services." I don't know if what I've said before helps explain that, but that's where he finds, and where we agree, that the system has broken down. That's an excellent idea. Again, that was just recommendation number 3. The government's brought in a whole bill, which we're taking up time debating, only addressing recommendation number 1.

I could go on, but I only have a few more seconds left. I know that health care in Ontario is very important. It's a very personal service offered by the government. It needs to be properly regulated and accredited, which includes ensuring pharmacy safety. That's what we're talking

about in Bill 117. We say we'll support it, but there were other recommendations that would actually protect patients that the government could have put in a bill and they did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to thank my colleague for her comments, but I'd like to also address the health minister's comments as well, that diluted chemo drugs—it should never, ever have happened, but the reality was that it did happen. When I take a look at the riding that I'm from, in Niagara, we had a situation where we had a C. diff crisis where 39 people died. The comment was, that should never happen again. How many times can we keep saying that when it comes to health care in the province of Ontario?

I think we should have a stronger debate around the outsourcing of some of the work, but when you take a look at the bill itself, the problem is that it doesn't address where the mistake happened. By adding a level of oversight in a hospital, are we doing something good? The answer to that is yes.

I can tell you that New Democrats will be supporting Bill 117, but what it fails to do is assure people that what happened from February 2012 to March 2013, where 1,202 Ontarians received diluted drugs, never happens again.

How do we make sure that it never happens again? Well, you have to pay attention to where the mistake took place, and the mistake didn't take place in the hospital, it didn't take place at MHS and it didn't take place at the cancer treatment centre, although any one of them could have caught it. The mistake took place with a group purchasing organization. The mistake took place at Medbuy, yet there's nothing in the bill to make sure that it affects Medbuy. There's nothing in the bill that brings in the oversight of those group purchasing organizations. There's nothing in the bill that will guarantee Ontarians that the mistake that happened does not get repeated in years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges-Markham.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I'm pleased to make a few comments related to the remarks from the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Clearly, I think we need to be very careful about some of the numbers that are being bandied around here. I was a member of the committee for the entire year, and I'm intimately familiar with the contents of not only this bill but, of course, the diluted chemotherapy report that was tabled today.

First of all, Dr. Thiessen did make 12 recommendations. The reason that only one of them is part of Bill 117 is, of course, because it's the only one that actually requires legislation. The other 11 recommendations are being addressed by the task force that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has established to look at those recommendations. That will take some time to work through, as they involve numerous stakeholders.

Now, as it pertains to the remarks from the member from Niagara Falls, I understand he has corrected his record. This is an incredibly sensitive issue. What I heard at one point was that he said some 1,200 people died. There is absolutely no truth to that whatsoever. I understand he has corrected his record, but this is the type of thing that points to the sensitivity of this kind of material.

Obviously, those 1,202 people did receive an underdosing of between 7% and 10% of their chemotherapeutic agent. That, of course, would be worrying. Those patients were contacted immediately by their oncologists, and all have received the appropriate reassurance and are being followed very, very closely. The recommendations in the diluted chemotherapy report are extremely important. They show the lack of attention of Health Canada to admixing of these particular compounds—clearly a part of manufacturing. We have requested a report back in—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Durham.

1700

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened very intensely to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. She brings a very informed perspective to the debate because she did practise as a nurse. I think she still has a very caring nature about everything and wanting to do the right thing.

She said, in her time, that she realizes some of this outsourcing to off-site organizations is probably more efficient. She also indicated that she was, I believe, a member of the committee, as well as the previous speaker from Oak Ridges–Markham, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health. I have high regard for the work she's doing on Ornge ambulance and other things too. But I'm surprised that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham wasn't promoted to cabinet in the last couple of rounds. I'm not trying to change the topic here; I'm just making an observation that I think a lot of the people in the House—because she is a very capable medical doctor. She has every right in her profession to comment on this bill.

The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock did mention that this group purchasing organization—this is the efficiency of the bill—makes good sense. I

support her for saying that.

Our member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mr. Yurek, who is a pharmacist—he was coaching to some extent during her remarks, of course—really did recognize that what was missing in this was more accountability. This government talks about it all the time. We heard about it in question period this morning, as we do pretty well every day.

Where is the money going through the savings? When he was a pharmacist, they took away the promotional allowances from the pharmacists, but where is the money? We ask for drugs for people with incurable diseases to get relief. There's a petition almost every day in this House. IPF—in my riding, no money for the drugs. Where's the money? I can't believe it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wanted to comment on some of the remarks that were made during the committee hearings by Dr. Thiessen about the lack of oversight for group purchasing organizations. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock did point out that only one of the recommendations from Dr. Thiessen's report has been included in this legislation. That is, we understand, because the other recommendations don't require legislation.

However, when Dr. Thiessen was presenting to the standing committee, he said very clearly, "We may need a government program to oversee the GPOs." He was asked by my colleague the member for Nickel Belt, "And why didn't you recommend that?" He responded, "Well, I suppose I should have. It was short-sighted on my part." He later said, "The idea of some kind of an infrastructure—perhaps government infrastructure ... which would lead to some oversight of GPOs is something that is worth considering."

We can't just pass the buck to some minister or ministerial committee to look at what should be done with GPOs. This was our opportunity. This Bill 117 was a legislative initiative that would respond to the tragedy that we saw with the chemotherapy underdosing, and there is currently nothing in that legislation that will prevent a tragedy like that happening again. The bill includes some important measures, some welcome measures, to improve patient safety, to enhance patient care, to provide a little bit of quality assurance, but it will not prevent—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the members for Niagara Falls, Oak Ridges–Markham, Durham and London West for their comments on my comments on Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, which was brought in response to the chemotherapy drug miscalculation that led to over 1,000 patients not getting the proper dosage of chemotherapy medication.

The member from Oak Ridges–Markham, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, did made some points. I mean, there's no question we're a little nervous, can we say, or uncertain that there is actually enough government oversight and responsibility in respect to this. She says that this is only one recommendation and the rest they can do in regulations. I don't know if there's another panel or some system to look at setting up the regulations to cover off the rest of Dr. Thiessen's report.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A panel to look at a panel.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's like a panel to look at a panel. Who knows? Maybe even Ornge is overseeing this new set of regulations that are coming up. You have to be a little nervous.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Dr. Mazza.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Dr. Mazza, I think, has a new job in Thunder Bay now, so he won't be overseeing that. But

the member from London West brought up about the oversight that the GPOs need, and I think Dr. Thiessen—I just have a few seconds here—the advantages that can occur from the GPOs. The problem is, this bill does nothing about setting up some sort of infrastructure to watch over these GPOs, and the parliamentary assistant did mention a bit of that.

Again, this started—I think it was February 2012 to March 2013. We're now a year later. They could have done a lot more as a government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I rise today to speak on the government Bill 117, entitled Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, on its second reading.

This is an important bill for me and the people of my riding of London–Fanshawe as we are directly impacted by the underdosing of chemotherapy patients' medication. In fact, out of the more than 1,200 reported cases of underdosing, over 600 happened to Londoners. As you can imagine, folks back in London–Fanshawe are very interested to see exactly what steps are being prepared to put in place to protect their health, to ensure that this error never happens again.

I must admit to feeling as though this Liberal government has forgotten London. That's how I feel, Speaker. There's a lot of things in London that have been happening with regard to jobs, and now the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs that we're talking about. It's becoming a prime example of what not to do in health

care management.

In the past year alone, Londoners have watched their health care system be ripped apart in front of them. It began with cuts to services like physiotherapy and hydrotherapy. Then we learned that our hospital CEOs were being paid one of the highest salaries in the province. Then came the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs. Last week, we learned about our young mental health patients being forced to sleep on floors. The hits just keep coming.

In today's London Free Press, we learned that due to cuts in provincial funding, London Health Sciences Centre now plans to eliminate more than 100 positions from nursing and cleaning staff. Apparently officials say that the cuts won't affect patients because that almost never happens. I am curious about one thing, though. Has this government ever acknowledged that cutting frontline care by nurses, who play an integral role in delivering care, will affect patient care?

Do they actually expect people to believe that if you hack away at the health care system that we as Canadians are proud of the world over, none of the hacking erodes patient care? Is our health care system so truly overabundant and inefficient that none of these slashes to front-line workers has any impact? I can hardly imagine that to be true, but yet we're here today.

Quite frankly, I am frustrated that my colleague from London West and I are forced to explain the actions by this health minister to the people of her hometown. In

fact, the health minister was missing in action when the scandal broke and, worse, was unaware that her ministry bore the responsibility for oversight at the hospital pharmacies. At that time, she claimed that the responsibility for oversight of the drugs belonged to the federal government. It sounded much like the answer we received from her during the Ornge air ambulance scandals. Ontarians are tired of the health minister claiming to be unaware of her duties and hearing, "I will look into it and get back to you." It's a toothless defence, and we have heard it one too many times.

1710

Now here we are, being asked to help pass a bill that is prematurely attempting to correct the mistakes of the underdosing, before the committee tasked with the studying of this incident has even shared their final report, which I understand is set to be released this afternoon. Speaker, I actually went back to the members' lounge here and tried to find a copy of that report, because I understand that there are six recommendations in that report that talk about the GPOs and what oversight is needed. But when I went back there, I was truly disappointed; I didn't see a copy of the report. Perhaps when I get back at 6 o'clock—if the House rises at 6 as it usually does—I'll be able to find and read that report, which I look forward to.

The final report of the committee was set to be published today and finalized today. However, that report was not limited to the same scope that the Thiessen report was, and it should not have been excluded from our deliberations on the bill that we have before us. Knowing that the work of the committee goes beyond the scope of the Thiessen report, why would the government go through the motions of putting forth a bill without waiting to receive the report back from the committee? These are important issues and questions that deserve answers, just like the patients who were underdosed with the chemotherapy drugs for more a year and their families deserve answers.

Sadly, there is no reason for this kind of behaviour, because at the end of the day we should all share the same priority with this bill: ensuring that no person facing cancer will deal with this type of health scare ever again.

Few people in this Legislature would oppose greater oversight and transparency of the health care system, as the mis-dosing scandal highlighted a gaping hole in how we deliver health care medications. This bill—or whatever this bill could be, with the work of the committee completed and included—could generally offer greater accountability and transparency measures.

Speaker, let's unpack this bill as it reads, and get to the heart of the matter.

Under Bill 117, the Ontario College of Pharmacists is given the authority to regulate hospital and institutional pharmacies, whether these institutional pharmacies are located in hospitals, long-term-care homes or prisons, by providing the Ontario College of Pharmacists with the ability to accredit and inspect hospital pharmacies, as they currently do with community pharmacies.

The bill also brings forward a number of amendments that are intended to improve the health regulatory system's ability to prevent or respond to issues that could affect patient care and safety.

I was pleased to learn that the Thiessen report sought input from key professional, structural, regulatory and oversight stakeholders, including Health Canada, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Hospital Association, along with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Having input from these groups is important in putting forward solutions that will ensure the kind of oversight that Ontario expects from all of us here in the Legislature.

By providing OCP with authority to create regulations, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to establish classes of certificates of accreditation with respect to the three kinds of pharmacies, we can help ensure all types of institutional pharmacies face increased

scrutiny and oversight.

Further, this bill allows for the OCP to be empowered to accredit, inspect and enforce various measures of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act. However, it should be noted that before the OCP can take any action that would affect the certification of accreditation of a hospital or institutional pharmacy, the OCP will be required to notify the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and provide the minister with any information they may request.

This bill also proposes to amend the Public Hospitals Act to require mandatory reporting to the regulatory college in the instance where a member may resign and a person—for example, a hospital administrator—who employs the member has reasonable grounds to believe that the resignation is related to a member's professional

misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

Bill 117 also proposes to amend the Regulated Health

Professions Act in four important areas.

It allows health colleges to share information with public health authorities where public health implications are suspected.

It allows health colleges to share information with a public hospital where patient safety and care could be affected.

It streamlines the appointment of a health college supervisor by removing the requirement that the council of a college has not complied with a minister's requirement. This aligns the supervisor appointment provisions of the RHPA with the Public Hospitals Act, clarifying that a supervisor may be appointed when it is in the public interest.

Lastly, it removes the obligation of a health college to investigate every complaint where it is believed by the registrar of the college that, if the allegation contained in the complaint were established, it would not constitute misconduct.

Essentially, these changes proposed by Bill 117 are steps in the right direction and, it should be noted, are supported by key health care stakeholders.

Now I would like to spend some time talking about the background of this bill. The government offers this bill in response to the underdosing of chemotherapy. I'd like to examine—and it's very important—the chronology of the underdosing more closely, because I think it happened a year ago, and maybe people forgot how we got to this stage.

On March 20, 2013, pharmacy assistants at Peterborough Regional Health Centre noticed that something wasn't quite right in the chemotherapy drug they were preparing for patients' usage. They were still using a previously prepared drug by one pharmaceutical company vendor, Baxter, and they were about to begin using the same drug but prepared by another vendor, Marchese.

However, they noticed that there was a difference. Unlike the Baxter-prepared drug, which read—and I'll read the technicality—four grams per millilitre; total volume of 105.26 millilitres; gemcitabine, 38 milligrams per millilitre, the bag from vendor Marchese was labelled

as four grams in 100 millilitres.

Thankfully, the pharmacy assistants out in the Peterborough hospital felt a certain amount of doubt about the quantity of the drug, and because of their uncertainty and their resulting actions, Ontarians—indeed, all of us—learned about the misdosing of patients for almost a year. Speaker, that is truly incredible, and I commend those pharmacy assistants for taking the time to question the work that they did. That's truly what we should be aspiring to: quality assurance in every level of government and everything that we do in our daily lives. We can't take things for granted.

This action taken by the Peterborough pharmacy assistant led to the discovery, of course, of the 1,202 patients at four hospitals in Ontario—Peterborough, Lakeridge Health, Windsor Regional and London Health Sciences Centre—and one hospital in New Brunswick who received lower-than-intended doses of the two cancer drugs, gemcitabine and cyclophosphamide.

We also learned that Marchese Hospital Solutions, who prepared the drug, did not have any kind of oversight. Loosely translated, this means they believed they

were operating in a grey area.

I'm still kind of dumbfounded by that, Speaker. When anybody is producing any medical equipment, medical products, I would think that there should be the utmost care in producing that, because you're affecting people's health, whether it's equipment that they need to use or whether it's treatment or drugs. But that's what they said; they thought they were operating in a grey area.

They stated that the IV bags they received were

overfilled and causing the dosage to be altered.

We also learned that the hospitals acquire these drugs through a group purchasing organization, or GPO; it has been talked about today. In this case, the GPO was a company named Medbuy, and they were not directly involved in this contract. Medbuy's contract with Marchese started in February 2012. However, according to the Toronto Star reports at the time, Medbuy arranged the contract between the hospitals and Marchese Hospital Solutions, the facility that prepared the IV bags with the medication.

This is a quote from Dr. Thiessen. He's saying that problems began when Medbuy provided Marchese with "only a simple statement of specifications." That's the quote.

1720

While Marchese used the correct medication dosage, it failed to account for the fact that the IV bags it was using were overfilled with saline. Again, I'm going to quote Dr. Thiessen: "The simple statement of specifications led Marchese to use a process that failed to adjust for the overfill volumes." The hospitals didn't correct the overflow because they were unaware of the lower concentrations, and there were no clarifying instructions from Marchese on the bags as well.

In their deposition before the committee, Medbuy told members that one of the reasons that Marchese was awarded the contract was because of their superior labeling practices. Somehow, this did not translate into

the actual product.

The fact that a chemotherapy drug was not labeled in a way that it could be given easily to patients is highly concerning. Added to this is the fact that Medbuy did not seek to have this clarified—even more troubling.

Over the course of the committee hearings, we discovered that it was this issue of labeling that became fundamental to figuring out what went wrong. At this point in the process, we saw the beginning of an investigation, and on April 9, 2013, Dr. Thiessen was appointed to lead an independent review of quality assurance within Ontario's cancer drug supply chain. But the mandate and scope that he was given was fairly constricted. He wasn't asked to look at the safe supply of drugs overall or the necessity of the GPOs in the contracting out of pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Thiessen did awesome work. It's really appreciated, what he did. He is an expert in his own right in that field. But again, I think this government failed to look beyond and go one step further in that oversight and really try to pinpoint where the problem went wrong.

I ask myself: Did the government really know the bigger scope of what the problem was when they asked Dr. Thiessen to study the issue and only give him a restricted mandate? I wish I could have an answer to that, because this bill doesn't address the oversight that's the real concern under the GPOs.

The social policy committee met numerous times, over and over again—I know they did—and also heard dozens of witnesses. MPPs spent countless hours poring over documents, recommendations and information, and the committee and legislative research worked really hard to provide this Legislature with an in-depth report.

I mentioned earlier that I believe this report has six new recommendations, which are truly worthy of collective consideration and debate before making a final decision on this bill. I wish they were in here so that we could have a fulsome debate on those findings as well.

As New Democrats, we do support this bill. We definitely think that we need to have the College of Pharmacists overlooking these pharmacies. That's one

step that's needed. But in fact, Ontario is mostly playing catch-up with other provinces like BC that have long had the College of Pharmacists regulate hospital pharmacies. This is not a new type of oversight; BC already has this.

Before I conclude, I read the Thiessen report, and there was a statement there that I found quite compelling. It reads as follows, the statement that he made:

"Notwithstanding the above science or art, there is the very real issue of patient anxiety about cancer therapy. Where does the individual turn for assurance? Commonly, an implicit trust is placed in the doctor or medical team. Emotional stability is greatly influenced by the conviction that the individual is receiving the best treatment plan; that is, given all the variables, the plan is carefully tailored for optimal results. News that a dilution of chemotherapy has led to underdosing is understandably upsetting and clearly a violation of the expectation for an optimized plan and the aforementioned trust. The emotional trauma experienced by the patient and caregiver(s) can be overwhelming."

That summarizes the kind of trust that Canadians, Ontarians, have in their health system. It does shake the ground that people walk on when they hear about the underdosing. I had heard from constituents about that,

and their concerns.

In particular, I was in contact with two constituents who live in London–Fanshawe and had experienced this underdosing. One particular gentleman had had treatment; he was a direct patient of the underdosing. He was worried. But I really commend him because of his outlook. He said, "I'm going to take it one day at a time, and I'm going to go for the results. I'm going to see my oncologist and make sure that I do all the checking that it hasn't affected me adversely." In the end, he said that the results came out okay for him. But he was one of over 1.200.

I just want to caution, and a word of very strong understanding to this government that we really need to make sure that we get this bill right. If we don't want this

to occur again, we have to get this bill right.

When it goes back to committee, I hope the six recommendations that the MPPs gruelled over and the legislative assembly research team gruelled over are going to be implemented in this bill. I know that the MPP from Nickel Belt certainly feels strongly that those recommendations are the right way to make sure this doesn't happen again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would certainly like to commend the member from London–Fanshawe on giving a very good summary of the committee's deliberations. As she has said, we spent nearly a year looking at this very, very unfortunate set of circumstances. Really, what we came to learn was that the devil truly was in the details.

We were most impressed by the pharmacy assistants at the Peterborough hospital. In fact, we went to the extent of questioning why the other three Ontario hospitals had not picked up on the issue of the labelling and the lack of specificity as it related to concentration. But we also have to recognize that clearly human error did take place here. You alluded, to a certain extent, member for London–Fanshawe, to the communication between Marchese Hospital Solutions and Medbuy. As we detailed in our report, there was a fundamental misunderstanding that the actual bag that was going to be produced of this admixed solution of either cyclophosphamide or gemcitabine was to be used for a single patient. Of course, it was not; it was to be used for multiple patients.

There was an email exchange—because the committee spent a great deal of time examining the type of communications that occurred—pharmacist to pharmacist. It was quite clear that neither the pharmacist at Marchese Hospital Solutions nor at Medbuy truly went back to first principles to look at how the drug was to be used.

Human error was a major part of what happened here. To a certain extent, you cannot legislate against this type of mistake. However, you need to put in place all the safeguards that are possible, and that's what Bill 117 is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to the member from London–Fanshawe. As has been said, she gave a very excellent diary of the events. She said it was found in Peterborough, and I'm not just repeating it; this is primarily for my own constituents to realize that I am quite aware of where the discovery was made and that it did affect Lakeridge Health in my own riding, which you mentioned as well.

The social policy committee has done the work. This bill was introduced some time after, in October 2013. There has been a reasonable amount of discussion on it. The report from social policy was filed today. As has been mentioned, Dr. Thiessen's report had 12 recommendations, only one of which has found its way into this bill.

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Our speakers today have commented, specifically the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London who is a pharmacist and who knows of what he speaks, and others as well—and I look forward to our next speaker.

I think the key here is, in the context of one of the clippings in the paper today, in the Post. It's called, "30 Years of Health-Care Dysfunction." This is by Brian Day, who is an orthopedic surgeon and former president of the Canadian Medical Association. He says, "On April 1, 1984, the Canada Health Act became law. Patients have been needlessly waiting, sometimes dying, ever since."

"The Canada Health Act," the article states "requires that care must be comprehensive, universal, portable and accessible, as well as being publicly funded and administered." Often, the mix of words around the "medically necessary" definition is becoming more and more complex.

When we look at some of the chronic diseases today, and I think of people siding with—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I want to thank my two colleagues from London–Fanshawe and London West for their hard work on this file to bring forth the concerns of the people they represent. As they stated, more than half the people that received this underdose were from the London area, and that's pretty scary for one community to deal with.

But the bottom line here is that I would think in today's day and age, after the things I've seen over the years—it wasn't too long ago that we had the tainted blood scandal, and the Canadian Red Cross and a lot of other agencies were shaken to the roots about the possible spread of a blood disorder or disease to healthy patients. That certainly required a lot of insight and a lot of oversight and a lot of changing of the laws to protect

the blood-flow system.

Also, why is it every time something like this happens, it's always after somebody is either killed, injured or led down the wrong path? Every time, it's always a knee-jerk reaction by this government after something happens. They don't do any prepping. They don't do any thinking about what could happen with these types of cancerfighting drugs that require a certain specialty and certain people to deal with this on a regular basis. There are no inspectors, there's no oversight, and this is an ongoing thing. We had Ornge, we had eHealth, now we have got this, and I'm sure there'll be more coming down the road. That all points back to this building, to that minister and that ministry for not following through on the things they should be following through on to protect the people of this province.

The people of this province deserve better, they deserve to know that they've got a solid health care system, that they don't have to worry, when they go to the hospital to receive these injections or these things, that they're going to be safe

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The speech that was delivered was definitely comprehensive in its assessment of this legislation. What I think we recognize from the speeches that have been delivered already in the House is that there appears to be a good consensus in the Legislature that this legislation should move forward expeditiously so it can be implemented. I have found that, particularly in a minority Parliament, we really have some good committee work that's being done. Not all of the good suggestions come from one of the political parties or from the government side; they come from a variety of different people and from the representations that are made. I think the member has clearly outlined the purpose of the legislation.

I think the legislation will accomplish what it is supposed to. We have accepted and endorsed all of Dr. Thiessen's recommendations. That doesn't always happen. Sometimes governments pick and choose. We have endorsed all of them. We've certainly established a task force to implement 11 of Dr. Thiessen's 12 recommendations. This legislation we're debating, of course,

responds directly to the 12th.

We see so many bills which are going through the House extremely slowly. I always believe there should be appropriate debate on bills. But where there is a consensus, particularly, I think it's important to have the bills moved to the committee, to have members of the committee interview people who come to the committee to make representations, to accept and read carefully the written representations which are made, and then to make any amendments or propose any amendments that they feel would strengthen the legislation.

That's what I hope will happen to so many bills in the House that appear to be stalled—not from the third party, I might say, but from the official opposition. I hope we can move expeditiously and concurrently on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member now has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I listened to all the comments after I spoke, and the one comment that the member made, Dr. Jaczek, about human error—there's absolutely going to be human error in everything. You know, human error—we're not perfect. We certainly make mistakes. But I think the gravity of this mistake resulted in a very serious situation which affected over 1,200 people. That's why we're taking it, and I know everybody here is taking it, extremely seriously.

The point is that the committee work that was done dug into this issue very thoroughly. They were very indepth, the questions that were asked. They were very concerned, because of course we're talking about people's lives. So not to have that report as part of our deliberations here today or debate here today is a point that we made as well. To get this bill right, I think that was something that was very important that should have come through.

The minister did file this bill on October 10, 2013. Dr. Thiessen's report was produced, I believe, in July 2013, and the committee took about a year to do all its investigating. So it's a little disappointing that we didn't have those recommendations and really talk about those recommendations that do belong in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon to discuss Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act.

Bill 117 is, in essence, the Ontario government's response to the chemo drug scandal that occurred last year. This was a very, very serious problem and one that I think deserves some revisiting in order to properly analyze Bill 117's merits.

I also want to state that the PC member for Elgin–Middlesex–London gave an excellent one-hour lead on Bill 117. I would encourage anyone who is interested in this bill to review his extensive speech, because he covers the bill and the context surrounding it in great detail. I do not have the time to get into that level of detail here today, but do still want to touch on the context surrounding the bill a little bit.

As I mentioned, Bill 117 is the government's response to last year's chemo drug scandal. Now, for those who maybe aren't familiar with the scandal, what essentially happened was that thousands of chemotherapy patients across the country received diluted chemotherapy drugs. So while doctors were prescribing certain amounts of drugs to be taken by these patients, the patients were in fact receiving less medication because the drugs they were taking were diluted and therefore not as potent as needed. Clearly, this was a grave problem.

We know that a number of patients were impacted by this error. The net result was that, in Ontario, 1,202 people received underdosed chemotherapy. Some examples of where this occurred are the Peterborough Regional Health Centre with one patient, Lakeridge Health Sciences with 37 patients, the London Health Sciences Centre with 691, and the Windsor Regional Hospital with 290 patients. Moreover, Speaker, 40 pediatric patients were impacted by this error.

Here in Ontario, when an individual is fighting cancer and depending on our health care system, it is absolutely inexcusable for them to receive diluted medication. That's not something we expect to see in Ontario, and rightfully so.

In response to the scandal, Dr. Jake Thiessen was tasked with analyzing the situation and presenting a report on how to make sure this doesn't happen again. Thiessen is well respected in the health care industry. He has a PhD and is the founding director of the University of Waterloo's school of pharmacy. He tabled his report last fall, titled A Review of the Oncology Under-Dosing Incident, and presented 12 recommendations. His report was well received by many in the industry. For example, the Minister of Health herself said, "Our government fully endorses Dr. Thiessen's recommendations and looks forward to working with Health Canada and our other health sector partners to act on them."

All good; right? That's what the viewers must be thinking. There was a serious problem, an expert in the field was tasked to help come up with a solution, a legislative committee was tasked with thoroughly analyzing the issue, and the government would then heed the advice of the committee and the experts and move to implement solutions.

The problem is, that's not how things have unfolded. Instead, as is so typical with this Liberal government, what we saw was the minister ignore the majority of Dr. Thiessen's recommendations and introduce legislation before the legislative committee even had a chance to finish its report and make its recommendations public. In fact, as I mentioned, Dr. Thiessen's report had 12 recommendations in it, and yet Bill 117 acts on exactly one of these recommendations. So, Speaker, here again we see the Liberal government ignoring other voices, even their own outside expert advisers, and insisting on implementing half measures.

Back in October, I voiced my frustration with this pattern when I responded to one of my colleagues who

was discussing Bill 117. I will say the same thing here today: You can't ask for the expert advice and then not listen to it. On multiple occasions, including when both the minister and the parliamentary assistant spoke on Bill 117, the government has lauded Dr. Thiessen and his notable background—and rightfully so. They spoke about how valuable his recommendations were, which is appreciated; and, as I mentioned, the minister even went so far as to endorse all 12 recommendations. But all that means nothing if we as legislators don't implement them.

I'm reminded of another expert adviser the Liberal government brought in to help them to address a serious issue: Don Drummond. I'd like to remind everyone about Don Drummond because he was brought in to advise the government on how it could tackle the crushing deficit the current government has created. He, too, was largely ignored by this government after he tabled his report.

The reason this is relevant is because the essence of Don Drummond's message was that if we don't act today to control spending, our services will be devastated tomorrow. Now, what I mean by that is that we must get control of runaway deficit spending in this province if things like our cherished health care system are to be protected. Don Drummond had dozens and dozens of recommendations on how to do that. Not only did the current government ignore his advice, they went in a totally different direction.

When we discuss bills like Bill 117 in this chamber, yes, we are discussing proposed legislation, but we are also talking about failures. We're talking about a failure in our health care system that occurred and people's lives were jeopardized. The question I pose to my colleagues here today and to Dufferin-Caledon families following today's debate is, are failures like this more or less likely to happen when in five or 10 years' time we aren't able to borrow \$10 billion or \$15 billion a year to fund our deficits? Because at that time, when the Liberal highdeficit spending spree has collapsed and our credit rating has been lowered even further and interest rates have gone up, we won't be able to afford the services we care about. What we will be facing instead is the grim task of embarking on rigorous spending cuts the likes of which we have never seen here in Ontario. We've seen this situation play out in other heavily indebted jurisdictions, like Greece. I, for one, do not wish to see that situation develop here in Ontario.

So like the Drummond report, here today we see Bill 117 ignoring the majority of Dr. Thiessen's recommendations. Actually, Speaker, upon closer inspection one will find that Bill 117 doesn't even fully implement the one recommendation it acts on. In reality, I suppose, you could say that the minister only implemented one half of the 12 recommendations. The recommendation in question is the 12th one from Dr. Thiessen's report. What Bill 117 seeks to do is to provide the Ontario College of Pharmacists with the authority to accredit and inspect pharmacies within public and private hospitals. Many viewers are probably scratching their heads, wondering why that isn't happening already. The truth is, it's an excellent question. It is easy to see how one would

assume that that is already the case because the college currently accredits and inspects the local community pharmacies—just not the ones in hospitals.

What Bill 117 would also do is give the College of Pharmacists the ability to enforce accreditation requirements. Bill 117 would provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with regulation-making authority to designate dispensaries and pharmacists and would also require all pharmacists to designate a contact person for the college. As you can see, Bill 117, while incorporating some good changes, is hardly all-encompassing, and really could have been far more effective in dealing with such a serious issue.

The other half of Dr. Thiessen's 12th recommendation that Bill 117 does not address deals with specialized electronic records and labelling requirements for non-sterile products prepared in a hospital pharmacy. Dr. Thiessen additionally stated that all hospital pharmacy labels should comply with comprehensive bar-coding identification for all products and all patients. Unfortunately, Bill 117 fails to establish this aspect of the one recommendation that it addresses.

As we discuss Bill 117, I want to touch on a theme that the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London talked about in his lead on Bill 117; it was a powerful and, I feel, accurate theme that I want to reiterate. What my colleague spoke of was how this government seems to have lost all direction in terms of proactive policy and, instead, is driving almost solely by reaction to the many scandals that have occurred under its watch. We see this in its policies, in its legislation and in its budgets. Everything seems to revolve around its many scandals: eHealth, Ornge, the massive \$1.1-billion gas plant cancellations and subsequent cover-ups—two of those, I might add, having been scandals in the Ministry of Health.

Moreover, when it comes to its budgets, the only thing that we see this government react to is NDP policy advisers' demands. That's how Premier Wynne composes her budgets, I suppose: wait for the NDP to make demands and react to them. I think this is very evident when we find ourselves debating legislation like Bill 117.

But the worst part is that while we see the Liberal government scramble to fix its own messes, what we rarely see is its response to the needs of Ontarians. Here we are debating Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, and what gets to me is that I still get calls regularly in my constituency office from Dufferin—Caledon residents who have been utterly let down by this government when it comes to health care.

This past February, I had a constituent who called my office, extremely upset. Her father is in his 90s, and the CCAC withdrew support for him. My constituent called and emailed the CCAC and never received a call back. No one from the CCAC called. No one checked in. The support was withdrawn, and that was it. What is my constituent supposed to think when their elderly father receives treatment like this, yet they also see the massive pay raises given to the CCAC CEOs across the province?

My constituent is left with this sad conclusion: "Most have no idea on the inefficiency of this unnecessary and 1750

wasteful layer of bureaucracy in health care. The CCAC CEOs have taken care of themselves and their staff as a first priority and enjoy nice offices, generous salaries and benefits."

Or what about another constituent from Dufferin-Caledon who was released from the hospital and got bounced around between CCACs, both claiming they were not responsible for his care? He went on for a week with no support. He was left to fend for himself.

When I see legislation like this introduced to enhance patient care, it really gets to me because I hear from families who are not getting adequate care, let alone enhanced care. I hear from many constituents who are on wait-lists or whose family members are on wait-lists, yet this government is too busy worrying about addressing its own scandals to do something about it.

The issue that I have with Bill 117 is not that it is a poor piece of legislation. It is a start. It is a beginning: 12 recommendations pulled down into one recommendation in one piece of legislation. I have concerns that the other 11 and a half recommendations that Dr. Thiessen made will be ignored, will be sidelined, will be considered and talked about but never actually implemented. Then we have to get back to those patients in Peterborough, those patients in London, those patients in Windsor who, while they were impacted and while they are rightly very concerned, want first and foremost for this problem not to occur again. I'm not convinced that Bill 117 goes far enough to ensure that that is not the case. If anything, the optimist in me thinks that getting one half of one recommendation is better than none, which is ultimately why we will support this piece of legislation and bring it forward to committee. It's why I support this bill with a small grain of salt: because Bill 117 really could have been so much more.

When you think of all of the recommendations that Dr. Thiessen made and when we realize the social policy committee just today tabled their recommendations after almost a year of researching and listening to experts and finding out exactly what happened in those hospitals, that we couldn't do better than what we have before us is, I think, a real shame. There was an opportunity from when this bill was introduced to today, when we continued to debate it, where we could have brought forward some substantive, proactive improvements to a system that clearly lacked oversight. We now understand where the problem is; we acutely understand where the problem is, because we've had families and individuals impacted by this lack of oversight. Instead of actually solving it, we've got a baby step; we have just begun to scratch the surface on where we can improve the system. I really wish that Bill 117 could have gone further to improve a system that didn't have the oversight that we needed.

The previous speaker, from London West, really brought the impact home when she talked about her community and individuals' families who were served by the London Health Sciences Centre. I'm sure the members from Windsor can talk about the impact that their community had to deal with.

Imagine, as a family member or an individual undergoing those chemo treatments, understanding that maybe it would have gone away, maybe we would have improved faster, maybe it would have made a difference if there had been the proper oversight and we hadn't had the errors in the system. I think it's ultimately our responsibility as legislators trying to improve the system, now that we understand where the problem is, to actually try to solve it.

Bill 117 is a baby step towards that solution. I don't want to see a case where, because the other 11 and a half recommendations are sitting on a minister's bookshelf somewhere where they're going to study it or they're going to have a conversation, we never actually get to resolving the entire issue. I think it would be a terrible injustice to the families who had to endure those committee hearings, who had to endure the stories from family members and individuals retelling what happened to them as they went through a system that, quite frankly, let them down. They truly believed that by putting their fate in the hands of their treatment and their specialists and their doctors—we have let them down. I don't want to be here in a year or two years and have to explain to another family member, "Oh, yeah, we didn't implement all the recommendations. We were going to get to that, but we're starting with Bill 117."

I think family members expect more. I think Ontario individuals who have to rely on our health care system, family members who are dealing with cancer or walking through a system where their loved ones are in the process of cancer treatment, deserve more, and I would hope that through Bill 117 and those other 11 recommendations we actually get to the stage where we never have to explain that we dropped the ball on that; we forgot that part; we got sidetracked with other scandals like Ornge and eHealth in the Ministry of Health. It's a ministry that has had its challenges for numerous years, and I would hate to think that the actual work of the Ministry of Health is being ignored because the minister and previous ministers—and you can list them all—have had to deal with scandals instead of actually dealing with the issues that are at hand. If we're not here to help out families and to set up systems and bring forward legislation and bring forward policy ideas that improve the lives of individuals who are dealing with cancer, I can't imagine a more wasteful time.

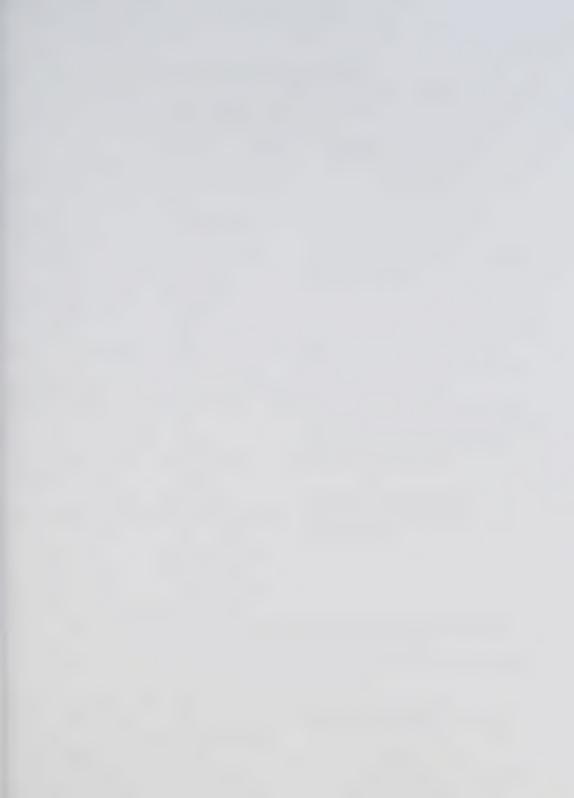
I really hope that the additional 11 recommendations are not simply forgotten because other scandals get in their way. As I say, I will leave it to that. I am going to be supporting Bill 117, but we're not done.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1757.* 







## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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TOTAL TOTAL TOTAL RELATED	Additional fitti	l'Innovation

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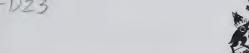
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Nº 122

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 2 April 2014

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 2 avril 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 April 2014

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

## MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated, Mr. Fedeli had the floor. He's not here. We'll continue the rotation.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Once again, it's a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on a bill. Today, we're speaking on a bill that's entitled MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014. Now, I'm going to be the only speaker, so that people are aware, and I'm going to speak for just a few minutes. You need to know, certainly, that the NDP supports this bill at a time when families in this province are feeling very squeezed with increased gas rates, with increased hydro rates and with increases to their municipal taxes. We believe we need to do our fair share as well with respect to MPP salaries. But we're supporting this bill to actually move it into committee. We want to ensure that the Premier and ministers are going to be covered by this pay freeze as well, and that clearly isn't articulated in Bill 177.

We wonder, though, why this bill was introduced so late, and then suddenly it is such a rush to get it done. In fact, I think there has been a request for unanimous consent at least five or six times over the last week since this was introduced, which would have limited my ability and my party's ability to debate this issue, or for the PC caucus to debate the issue. We don't think that that is very parliamentary. We all have the right to debate issues in this House regardless of what the bill is.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about why I think this bill was actually introduced. I think it is a political channel changer. It was introduced at a time when we're talking about gas plant scandals here in the province. It was introduced as a way to change the channel, to show the government as being not as wasteful as they

are. I don't think it has anything to do necessarily with the MPP wage freeze. It was introduced as a purely political measure.

I've been here for three years, and the government has done nothing about executive and CEO salary perks, bonuses, car allowances, obscene severance packages—even for cause, let alone wrongful dismissals—in the publicly funded agencies. We have CEOs in this province in publicly funded agencies receiving outrageous salaries, perks and bonuses. I was actually laughing, and it's not a laughing matter—I was looking at some of the stuff last week when this bill was introduced, and it's almost like winning a lottery in this province if you get severed from a publicly funded agency where you were the CEO or a VP

If we take Ian Troop, for example, I think he was hired and he was making \$500,000 or \$600,000. He negotiated himself a severance package that was equal to or more than that. He worked at his job for the Pan Am Games for, I don't know, a year or a year and a half, was severed, and with that package he ends up an instant millionaire. It's like watching that TV show on Saturday mornings: How I Won the Lottery and What I Did with That Money at the End of the Day. The NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath, think that the government should actually be focusing on doing something about the caps on CEO salaries.

I want to just spend a few minutes—because for the viewing public, they'll see one of these terminations and severance packages in the news one day, and then they won't see it again for about a month, or two months, or a year. I just want to bring all of those together, the most recent ones, and make people aware of what's happening here in the province. According to the 2012 sunshine list—I reviewed the 2013 sunshine list this morning as well, and there hasn't been very much downward change in those CEO salaries. In fact, most of them are the same or have gone up a little bit, with some of the bonuses.

Tom Mitchell, CEO of Ontario Power Generation—let's go back to, I think, a week or two ago, when the Auditor General released a scathing report about that agency—made \$1.7 million in 2012, and a little bit more than that, I think it's \$1.71 million, in 2013. That's a lot of money.

Laura Formusa, CEO of Hydro One—another one of those agencies—made \$1.036 million, with a raise of over \$70,000 in 2012. The raise was almost twice the pay of the average Ontarian in this province.

The CEO of London Health Sciences made over \$600,900, including a raise of \$45,000. This is the same

CEO, I think, who is in the news today—and I'm sure we'll be talking about that at some point—who is cutting 100 jobs at London Health Sciences, nursing jobs and cleaning jobs. She's making \$700,000. That is the wage of seven nurses, perhaps, or 14 cleaners.

The CEO of St. Joseph's Health Care in London made

\$470,000, including a raise of \$20,000.

CEOs at all major Toronto hospitals are making more than two times what the Premier of this province makes,

\$418,000, which is the proposed cap.

In my neck of the woods, Kevin Smith—who was the supervisor of the Niagara Health System; he's now the CEO of the Niagara Health System, and he's also the CEO of St. Joe's in Hamilton—made \$721,000 last year; \$2.8 million over the past four years. Now he's also the CEO of the Niagara Health System, but I don't know what he's making in addition, for being the CEO of two hospitals in the province.

The CEO of OPG earned more by January 16 of this year than the average household makes in one year—one year. The CEO of Hydro One—it would take him until January 27 of this year to earn as much as the average

person earns in this province.

0910

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about Phil Kessel?
Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't know about Phil Kessel. I don't know.

Last week when the member from Vaughan introduced this MPP wage freeze, he said that the opposition parties—the third party should be leading by example here with this MPP wage freeze. Well, our party doesn't want to follow your lead, because all we've had in our three years and prior to that are scandals with the Liberal government: a gas plant where you spent over \$1 billion to save a couple of seats during an election, that we're all still wearing; eHealth—a scathing report on eHealth, where you wasted \$1 billion of taxpayers' money, and still today, we heard at the LHIN review that not everyone is on an electronic patient file. Only around 70% of the patients in this province actually have eHealth files today. The CEO, Sarah Kramer, billed thousands of dollars for limousine rides, including one \$400 trip from Toronto to London, before she resigned from her \$400,000-a-year job in June. She was given a \$317,000 severance package and received a \$114,000 bonus after just 10 months on the job. As I said when I started, losing your job in a public service agency here in the province of Ontario is like winning a lottery.

In 2014, employees at eHealth will share \$2.3 million in performance bonuses in the wake of a court settlement that restored payouts cancelled in 2011. Former eHealth chief Greg Reed, who was forced to leave by the Minister of Health, to scrap bonuses in 2011—he left the agency with a severance of \$400,000, almost double the Premier's salary of \$210,000. And then we have Ornge and Chris Mazza: Chris Mazza received \$9.3 million over a six-year period, in addition to it being under RCMP investigation as we currently stand here today—no oversight or accountability from this government.

Then, last week, I think somebody had a question on Presto. The Presto card fare system will cost \$700 million to fully implement, and that will make it one of the most expensive transit systems in the world, the Auditor General said. When the member from Vaughan says we should lead by example, we won't be leading by your example.

I just want to go back to the fact that the government really is just trying to change the channel by introducing this bill and a number of other bills that have come forward in the last week or so. There's really only been a handful of bills with any substance, when I looked at the business before the House over the last week, that have passed or are anywhere close to passing in this House. The government has been spending its time doing things like appointing Sandra Pupatello to Hydro One—which doesn't lead by example when you're giving somebody a part-time job that pays \$150,000—and like hiding behind gross underestimations of gas plant cancellations.

Although we support this bill, I wanted to take this opportunity just to outline some of these scandals, some of the concerns, some of the issues that the government really should be spending their time addressing in this

House.

I'm going to close now. I look forward to this bill coming to committee so we can have a look at it and perhaps make some amendments if they're required. I would suggest that the government go back and look at some of these other areas, and bring them forward. Bring forward some of the important bills that need to be addressed in this province, so that we're all here really doing the work that benefits the people who live in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to respond to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry. I did recognize the minister behind you.

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** Sorry. Anyway, thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few remarks.

I have high regard for the member for Welland, as I do for all members of the Legislature, but I do think that when one listens to the remarks that were just being made—I hope I'm not too offensive by saying I think it's a bit cute by half.

Certainly, in terms of the MPP compensation, the member suggests that this is being put forward as something that's just there to change the channel. The fact is, the member knows full well, when we put the MPP compensation freeze in place in 2009, it was something that indeed we felt was the right thing to do in terms of setting an example and obviously indicating to everybody in the province that we recognize the challenges other people are facing. We also feel that there's a need to take control of public sector salaries. That, of course, expires March 31 this year, so this legislation is required in order for us to be able to maintain that freeze.

If the member or other members want to suggest they want an increase, that they want that to happen, they should say so. The fact is, this is something that we feel strongly about, and I would actually tend to think the third party would agree with it as well. Don't forget, this also follows the accountability act, capping public sector CEO salaries. That's something important as well. You made reference as if that was not part of it.

The bottom line is that we are determined to take a realistic and a strong approach to eliminating the deficit. We are the leanest government in Canada with 15% of the budget going to costs and compensation. We must all do our part.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I listened quite intently to the member from Welland. She said right at the beginning she wouldn't be speaking for long. I was somewhat disappointed. There's so much to be said, so little time to say it.

But I would say this, that we understand you support the bill. I'd say it's sort of like an admission that the coalition government is in full effect. In fact, your leader—the other day when she walked out, I thought she had a special meeting with the Premier. I thought there was a secret meeting going on somewhere. But I know they're working hand in hand, and that's completely acceptable, I suppose.

But here's the real fact: Our leader, Tim Hudak, put on the table some months ago—I should say, through you, Madam Speaker, that we would like an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. Let's not tinker around at the edges. There are 107 MPPs. I would say that's probably an appropriate thing, to start with a wage freeze there. To make any significant impact, we've got to look at across the board.

What our leader said—he's put on the table the million jobs plan, and I think that is a reasonable goal that he could achieve if we could all get on the same page here. It's about the red tape. It's about the regulations. It's about electricity rates. It's about the mess they've made of this province in the time that they've had.

I know our member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will be speaking shortly, and I wait anxiously to hear his remarks.

We want this to go to committee. We want the public to get down to the bottom of it. In the climate of this budget, where they're increasing spending, by the reports in the paper this morning, by \$5.7 billion, at a time when they've got a huge deficit already—it's between \$12 billion and \$13 billion now. This idea here, a symbolic move by the Minister of Finance, is nothing more than a shell game. If he wants to do the right thing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments? The member—you're not in your own seat.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Do I have to go back to my seat? The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes. Miss Monique Taylor: I'll do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I think the member from Welland did an absolutely great job spelling out exactly how we feel about this bill as New Democrats over on this side of the House. We're more than happy to take this wage freeze, but we think that it has to be fair.

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When we're talking about CEO salaries—the prices that they're taking home as bonuses are way more than the paycheque that I take home; there's a problem with that. Like I said, I'm grateful for the money that I take home, because I know that most people in this province don't have an opportunity to take that kind of money home. So I know how blessed and how grateful I am to have that. But other people need to be looking in their own backyards, at what kind of money they're taking home. We need to make sure that ministers and PAs are taking pay cuts or freezes just the same as we are. We know that—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Excuse me. We know that the Liberal government has made sure that every single one of their members is either a minister or a PA. We have ministers with no portfolios. We need to make sure that things are actually fair. Things need to be fair. When we're talking about fairness, when we're talking about transparency, accountability, let's make sure we get it right and that we're not just picking on people who—I mean, what are we talking about here? We're talking about increased hydro rates, increased gas rates—people can't afford it. In Hamilton, it's \$17 for Union Gas, and that's the low end of the spectrum. Enbridge has a 40% increase; Union Gas, \$17 a month. People are coming to me saying, "What am I going to do? I'm on a fixed income."

That \$17 a month means a lot to those folks. They don't seem to mean anything to the people on the other side of the House.

Speaker, when we're talking about fairness, we'd better make sure we get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No-

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, I'm sorry. The Minister of Education.

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I'm determined. Now I'm going to get my comments in here. We'll eventually get it right. Thank you, Speaker.

Let me deal first of all with a couple of red herrings here. First of all, cabinet ministers, PAs, whips, the government House leader, opposition House leaders, whatever—all those various positions that people have—everybody is included in the wage freeze. There's no question about that. Everybody who sits here, whatever they are being paid, will have their wages frozen.

The second thing is that there has been a lot of conversation about CEO wages. In fact, we recognize that we

do need to address executive compensation for public sector CEOs. There's a different accountability act that addresses capping increases to executives in the public sector; that's a different piece of legislation. This piece is focused on MPPs in whatever capacity in this House they happen to serve.

Just to bring the public up to date, we did bring in an MPP wage freeze in 2009. It was a five-year wage freeze. It began April 1, 2009, and expired yesterday, or maybe Monday. So the reason this act is actually quite urgent is to prevent us from getting our April 1 pay increase that would otherwise happen, which is why we are trying to expedite getting this legislation passed so that in fact the additional five years, for a total of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank

you. The member has two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** Thank you, Speaker. Maybe I'll just respond through you to the comments of the member from Guelph.

In fact, yes, the freeze ends April 1, but it's frozen anyway, so whether it's done on April 1 or May 1—it can be done retroactively. We've actually confirmed that,

I think, with the Clerk's department.

What bothers me most about the introduction of the bill is that it was done so late and it was done in a way to try to make the opposition party and the third party—it was trying to squeeze us. It was to allow you to try to change the channel and put it on the opposition parties, when in fact you didn't bring it forward in a timely way. I think you did that purposely so that you could use it and say, "Well, the MPPs don't want a wage freeze," where, in fact, we certainly are prepared to take wage freezes in these tough times.

The other piece that I wanted to talk about, though, was the fact that the Liberal government has not committed, at this point, to what that CEO wage cap is going to be. I can tell you, Speaker, this issue of CEO pay scandals has been happening for many years. It happened before the Liberal government as well. I raised this issue once before in the House: A woman by the name of Eleanor Clitheroe, under the Tories—we're talking about Hydro One—was making \$2.2 billion in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and still today we have CEOs making close to \$2 million at Hydro One. So clearly this is a problem that hasn't been addressed, and the government needs to deal with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 177 today. I want to thank the member for Welland for some of her comments. I'm always pleased to listen to what she has to say in this House. She is absolutely right when she talks about the way this bill was introduced. It's a Liberal channel changer; it's about a way of trying to say to the public, "Oh, look at us, the McGuinty-Wynne or the McWynnety government, making such sacrifices on your behalf to wrestle down the debt and deficit in Ontario."

This a bill that—would it not have made perfect sense to sit down with the House leaders and say, "This is something we're planning to do. This is something we'd like to bring forward. It specifically affects only the members of the Legislative Assembly"? The courteous thing to do would have been to sit down with the House leaders. Mr. Milloy would have said to Mr. Wilson and Mr. Bisson, "Look, this is something we want to talk about. This is something we want to introduce."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Kingston and the Islands—I can't say the minister of anything anymore, because he dropped his portfolio. He's the minister of an empty briefcase now. I like the guy, and I'm going to be sorry to see him go, because we've gotten along very well here for 10 years. He does like to interject when I am speaking, but I'm going to address his concerns here.

A lot of things can be accomplished by House leaders. In fact, this is something that would have been easy to accomplish, because we have said from the outset that we're going to support the legislation. But there are some things about this bill and this government that need to be said. They introduced this bill as somehow this is now the answer to the mess that they themselves have created. Do you understand how deep-I know you do, Madam Speaker; I'm not saying this individually to you. But I hope people understand how deep the hole is here in Ontario. It is something that would make Chubb Crater look like a pebble hole—the Chubb Crater up in Quebec, that big, massive—where the meteor struck some time ago, centuries ago? That's there, and it's one of the Canadian natural wonders that this struck the earth and left such a massive hole that it's still talked about centuries and centuries later. This is the hole.

This is the interesting thing, Madam Speaker: This bill says that wages will remain frozen—there is no deadline of 2019 in the bill. Wages will remain frozen for MPPs until two years after the budget is balanced. The way this government is going—with the help of the third party and my friend from Trinity—Spadina, God bless—and running the fiscal affairs of this province, we will never—I want you to write this down. In fact, it is being recorded in Hansard; I'm glad that this is going to be written down. This government, this Liberal McWynnety government, will never, never balance a budget. They do not have what it takes. This government will never balance a budget.

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This province was in much better shape. If you take a look at what happened—5.6, whatever the number you want to talk about—think about 2003, and the natural things that had nothing to do with the government: two bouts of SARS; mad cow; and a blackout that we had nothing to do with, that originated in Ohio. That added up. You had half a year—this government had half a year to take the necessary fiscal steps to try to bring this back into balance. They refused; they did nothing. Under this government, we will never balance.

But I want to bring into perspective what we're talking about here. We're talking about a wage freeze for members of the Legislative Assembly, which we support. But this is the net effect of it per year: about \$350,000. Now, I say to my friend from Welland, how long would it take those high-priced civil servants to earn \$350,000? That is the collective effect of this bill on the budget of the province of Ontario: about \$350,000 a year.

Yesterday or the day before, we just found out that this government is—you know that big hole I was telling you about? I guess "Chubb Crater" maybe isn't the best description, because it shouldn't be something that is so broad. It should be something that is so deep that the further you go down, the more unlikely it is that you're ever going to be able to climb out of it.

In fact, our deficit is getting China-like, and I don't mean like the deficit of China. I mean that we're digging so far down—you know the old saying that if you dig deep enough, you're going to come out in China? Well, that's where we're getting with this debt and this deficit. The debt is more than double that of California, and we've been led to believe that California is the face of a fiscal mess. Well, Ontario is twice that bad.

We have a Premier now and a finance minister who are going around bragging that they're going to add \$5.7 billion to the spending of this province. They're going out there, trying to buy the friendship of this group or that group, saying, "Well, we're going to invest this in your issues, and we're going to invest this in your issues," hoping that when it comes down to ballot day, they're going to be successful at the polls.

Ask yourself this question. If the Liberals are successful at the polls, and they're adding \$5.7 billion in spending—this is their DNA. I think this is why people like my friend from Kingston and the Islands are leaving this place, because they no longer—and my friend from Sudbury; and Linda Jeffrey, former member—she is no longer a member, so I can use her name. Linda Jeffrey, former member, has decided to leave this place to run for mayor in Brampton. You see, Linda Jeffrey was always one on the fiscally conservative side of that side of the House. I believe that she looks at these numbers and she says, "You know what? I've got to get out of this place, because this party that I'm a member of is taking us deeper and deeper and deeper into the mire."

I know my friend from Kingston and the Islands is leaving for that same reason. He can't take it anymore. He's not even interjecting, because he is so saddened by what his own government has been doing.

What we have said is, "Okay, you want to use this as an example? We're fine with that." As my friend from M Hamilton Mountain said, we make a good wage. We're not starving on this side of the House; we're not starving on any side of the House. We're prepared to make the kinds of sacrifices that might help the fiscal situation here in the province of Ontario. However, making an example of MPPs is not changing the fiscal map in the province of Ontario. It is not changing the grid. We're talking about \$350,000.

Here's what we have said from the onset, Madam Speaker. We have said from the onset that if you want to

make a significant mark and do something that will be recognized as being more than symbolic, you have to apply a wage freeze to the entire public sector. That has to be broad based and across the province of Ontario, everyone who is a direct or indirect government employee.

Look, I appreciate the work that our public servants do, but anybody who says that they're not in a fortunate group would be deluding themselves. They are in a fortunate group. They have, in most cases, significantly more job security than people in other sectors. In most cases, they enjoy a defined benefit pension plan. They have some tremendous advantages over the rest of the population.

If it is the government that has this debt and deficit, then everyone who is part of that government needs to also, as they have accepted the benefits of being part of government, whether they are in the legislative arm as we are or in the administrative arm as they are—if they have accepted those benefits, then is it not equally fair that they accept some of the responsibility as we try to wrestle this debt and deficit down?

I think the public service is probably ready to do that, but do you know who's not ready? Do you know who is not ready to do that? It is Premier Wynne and the Liberal government, because they don't want to face any of the negative pushback from those who may not buy into the plan.

If you were to implement an across-the-board public wage freeze, that would have not a \$350,000 impact but a \$2-billion impact yearly. As long as that wage freeze stayed in effect, a \$2-billion-a-year impact. Now that is significant. That is something that would help us get the deficit under control much quicker. I think the public has to understand that. It's wonderful to go and say, "Look what we've done. We've frozen the wages of members of provincial Parliament." Great. We accept that. But don't try and say that this is now a manifestation of what is an austere government. Please-\$68 billion in government spending when this party came into power. I shudder to think what it's going to be in the next budget, but if we're talking \$5.7 billion of new spending, spending in this government is going to be over \$130 billion. So spending will have almost doubled.

Interiection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—he's being facetious, of course. "Well, let's cut." If your spending has doubled, something is wrong. You're not getting the bang for your buck. You're not putting the money in the best places. You guys are spending money simply on the basis of trying to buy votes from this group or that group.

In fact, I look at the Ministry of Education as the minister sits there. Is education important? It's the most important thing we can give to our children, but you have to manage the system. Is it not somewhat strange that we have 250,000 fewer students in the province of Ontario today than we had when the Liberal government took over, but we are spending \$8.5 billion more in education?

This government is—this is how they think: "Well, if you just spend more, spend more, spend more, you must be doing it right." Well, if you only thought that way, as a family or as a business, you'd be out of business in no time at all. Whatever happened to spending wisely? Whatever happened to judiciously examining the expenditures and the revenues and asking, "Are we maximizing what we can get out of this program or that program? Are we maximizing what we can get out of this ministry? Are we maximizing what we can get out of this sector?" Or are we simply saying, "Oh, well, somebody over there said they weren't happy. Let's shovel in a little more coal"? Let's just keep the fire going. Rev it up until it's 95 degrees in the kitchen, because as long as we just keep putting more in there, everybody is going to be happy.

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Well, it doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way because sooner or later, you've got to pay the piper. We have a debt problem in this province that is becoming an albatross around the neck of anyone who wants to consider investing in this province. But this government doesn't want to deal with it.

It's funny. When Kathleen Wynne was elected the leader of the Liberal Party, she was running in that convention on a platform of wrestling the deficit to the ground in Ontario, because she saw that as the priority. She then became the Premier by default because Dalton McGuinty had left in disgrace and scandal. So she became the Premier by default, and now she thinks—by the way, Speaker, Premier Wynne thinks that she has no—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, a point of order.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I love to listen to my good friend, but I would like him to speak on the topic. He's attributing things that I'm not sure he's allowed to do—

**Interjection:** Motive—you're impugning motive.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —too many motives. I would like you to refrain from doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member not to impugn motive and obviously consider the importance of the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think for any moment that I impugned anyone's motive. As far as this being on the topic, this is a bill about the finances of the province of Ontario. If I can bring into focus the disaster that we are facing here as a result of this government, I think that is as pertinent to the bill as any conversation we could be having. I beg your indulgence on that score, Madam Speaker, because if this is what they want to do and this is what they're portraying as somehow attacking, this is—they're the ones who get up here and say this is the leanest government in history.

Interjections.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Yes, that is extremely funny. I'm trying to show you, Madam Speaker, just how lean they aren't.

A couple of years ago they talked about taking charge and working on the debt and the deficit, so they did put a freeze on senior management in the public sector. But as it turned out, 98% of the people affected received bonuses—98% received bonuses—which more than compensated for what would have been any kind of a cost-of-living increase to their wages. I guess my question is, what did those 2% do wrong? Madam Speaker, can you imagine being one of those 2% who didn't get a bonus? Wow. I don't want to read the employment evaluation on those folks, because it must have been some negative. Can you imagine? If 98% of the Toronto Maple Leafs were doing their job, we wouldn't be fighting for a playoff spot right now; we'd already have locked it up. It's just incredulous that they can somehow sell this. I don't know if the public doesn't pay attention sometimes because they're so inundated with reams and reams of information that make no sense whatsoever. How can they not ask themselves how any organization can pay a bonus to 98% of its people? It just doesn't make sense. Bonuses are paid for performance above and beyond the call of duty. How can 98% of the people achieve that? The bar is so low for these people that they have redefined the game of limbo. You remember people used to go under that bar, the limbo? Well, I'll tell you, these people could slide under it like a rattlesnake.

But anyway, now they come out with this \$5.7 billion in new spending. There are two things they're trying to do here: (1) If there is an election, they're out to buy the votes; (2) If there isn't an election, they're out to buy the NDP. There's one of two things at play here. But \$5.7 billion in additional spending—here's some of the things they're going to do. Now they're going to, after adding \$4 billion to the debt retirement charge to spend on other things, as Vic Fedeli was able to point out—Vic's doing a great job as finance critic. In his Fedeli Focus on Finance, he has brought to light a number of the things that this government has been doing-I can't believe that the time has almost run out. Now they say they're going to take the debt retirement charge off in 2016. Well, we told these people in 2011 that the debt retirement charge, as far as the consumer was concerned, had already been

But this is the way they do politics. It's like boutique politics. "Oh, we've got to throw something like this in there. We've got to make these people happy. We've got to throw something in here, a little bone for this group here," and the next thing you know, spending is right back where it was: out of control.

You see, the Premier got her hands on the door to that corner office a little over a year ago, and she don't want to let go. She don't want to let go. She loves the trappings of power. If it costs your children and grand-children and great-grandchildren their future, she is prepared to mortgage that, and that is a shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's always a treat to listen to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and he

didn't disappoint this morning, so I want to thank him for that.

I also wanted to comment that there were a couple of things he said that really struck a chord with me, and they struck a chord with the constituents that I represent in London West.

A lot of what we're seeing in this legislation is a PR spinning exercise. It's an attempt to deflect attention away from the financial abuse of public dollars that we've seen from this Liberal government, to try to change the channel by saying that we need to freeze MPPs' salaries.

Of course we need to freeze MPPs' salaries. The NDP agrees that this is important for MPPs to do when the people in this province are being squeezed. They are facing significant financial challenges, and we need to lead by example.

I hear from constituents in my riding who are on ODSP, the Ontario Disability Support Program, and their benefits are not being indexed to inflation. They are having to do more with less. They are seeing their costs go up as the amount of support that they get remains the same, and they are struggling. People in my riding are struggling with skyrocketing hydro rates. At the same time, we're seeing this symbolic, grand gesture with the MPP Salary Freeze Act.

We're not seeing the action that Ontarians expect from this government to go after CEO salaries. We have seen no action to cap CEO pay, and that's why having the debate on this legislation is important. We have to bring this to light.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to take a slightly different approach. I would like to ask a question, Speaker. How many members knew, or were interested in knowing, what they were going to make if they were going to be an elected member of provincial Parliament? I don't know about you, but for any office that I ever ran for, I didn't have a clue as to what we were going to make, whether it was a local office, a provincial office or whatever.

We are pretty well-paid in here. Let that be said. We're probably in the 1% or 2% or 3% of the highest wage-earners in this province, whether you're a backbench member, a cabinet minister or whatever. So let's get that out of the way.

This bill affects everybody in this House, whether you're the Premier or a lowly backbench member in opposition, in government or whatever. That's number one.

Let me talk about something else: the sunshine list. I am as concerned as you are, and have talked about this publicly, privately and openly for many, many years. There are way too many people earning way too much money in the public sector in Ontario in one way or another. It's incumbent on us that we do something about it. I don't know exactly how to do it. Yes, you've got your simplistic answers, but you and I know that these issues are much more complicated than that.

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This is a very simple bill and we should just get on with it and pass it. Salaries have been frozen for the last five years; they will be frozen for at least the next three or four years. We're doing quite well in here. I think we can get on with the business of dealing with the issues of this province by passing this bill as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland—Ouinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have to say that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke always brings a very energized and enlightened view of any bill that's brought forward here in the chamber. But I do have to strike home again and reinforce what the member said earlier. This bill is, again, inept in its ability to bring austerity to the province of Ontario and get Ontario back on track. I mean, \$350,000—that's the economic impact this bill is going to have on the so-called austerity measures that the Liberal government is bringing forward. That's one executive in the public sector. So they hire one more executive—which they will this year, guaranteed. You many more executives are being hired in the bureaucracy—an over-bloated bureaucracy. It's a travesty.

People in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West are struggling to stay in their homes with skyrocketing hydro bills. Their property taxes are going up. This government seeks under every rock, nook and cranny on how they're going to bring in new taxes and put it on the backs of the hard-working people, not just in Northumberland—Quinte West, but across this province. It's asinine what this government does.

Madam Speaker, I can honestly say, when I stand here and I represent the fine people from Northumberland—Quinte West, this government can no longer be trusted with the books here in the province of Ontario. We need to change this team. Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have put forward great ideas, and we're going to lead this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I did enjoy the presentation made by my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I equally enjoyed the passion that the Chair of cabinet put into his defence of Bill 177.

I just want to congratulate this government for having introduced this bill. It's a great bill. We need to remind the public that we haven't had a salary increase for five years.

**Interjection:** What about the feds?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to get to that.

What better way to do it than to introduce a bill so that the entire Ontario population knows that we have frozen our salary for five years and that we will continue to do so—because I suspect a lot of people don't know that, and we needed a bill so the public understands the passion, like the Chair of cabinet put into his defence of our freezing our salaries. I think this is really good.

The other thing the government could do is to introduce a bill to say, "By the way, we don't have a pension

and we need a bill to remind people that MPPs haven't had a pension since 1995." What better way to do it than to introduce a bill that people will get to know about? Because as you know, 97% to 99% of the public doesn't know that we don't have a pension, and they ought to know, and I think—I recommend this to the Premier and I recommend it to the Chair of cabinet, that we introduce such a bill.

And what else could we do? The Mike Harris regime cut 23 MPPs in 1998. They proudly did that so that people like me could represent 160,000 people, which is good, because this is a way of saving money and it's a way of me being able to represent more and more people. All this is good. Introduce yet another bill to do that. I think you guys are doing just great.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Point of order: I just wanted to clarify that there is a pension plan for Liberals. It's called

political patronage appointments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from London West, Kingston and the Islands, Northumberland–Quinte West and, of course, my friend from Trinity–Spadina.

I just want to close by reminding people, first of all, that, as my friend from Welland said earlier, the Liberals don't want to talk to the bill. I understand that, because they've had their tongues cut out by the Premier, I think. But this bill, whenever it's passed, will act retroactively. Whenever this bill is passed—and it will be passed—it will act retroactively, so it will come into effect April 1 regardless of when it actually receives royal assent. So there's no issue about when this bill actually gets debated and when it gets passed.

My friend from Kingston and the Islands did talk about some of his thoughts on it, and some of them we share. The reality is that if you're going to get a hold of a burgeoning debt or deficit in this province, you have to take stronger steps than what we're taking here. This is a baby step. This is not even a baby step; it's a minuscule symbolic gesture. But as I said, it could have been done in such a different way. In the week that this Legislature was on a break, Minister Sousa goes out and makes this grandiose announcement: "By gosh, look at us, the Liberals. We're going to refreeze the salaries of MPPs for a further" indeterminate period of time. They used the date 2019, but the fact is, the bill clearly states that they will be frozen until two years after the budget is out of deficit.

Members in the federal House have continued to get raises. That's why we had to bring in this bill, because our wages are tied to the federal wage; 75% of the wage paid to a federal MP is supposed to be the salary of a provincial MPP. So they have unfrozen their wages—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Time is up. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: It's a pleasure to rise this morning and add my—I was going to say two cents, but we'll just say zero cents—20 minutes, to Bill 177, the MPP Salary Freeze Act. I listened with great interest to my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for 20 great minutes on the things he had to say. I'll build upon some of those things.

We all have our part, in Ontario, especially as elected officials, to turn our province around and get our finances heading in the right direction. As the member so eloquently stated, we're really talking here about, what, \$350,000? That is really what the freeze would amount to. That is not going to get us out of the hole that they

dug over the last 10 years.

I want to say at the outset that I'm supportive of this bill and supportive of the fact that our salaries will continue to be frozen. I didn't get into this for the money; I got into this to serve my community and represent the people of Kitchener—Conestoga. I've thoroughly enjoyed the last two years doing so, and I can assure you it's definitely not about the money.

However, though, our caucus has stated that we are committed to an across-the-board public sector wage freeze so that the burden is shared equally. Instead of the government's failed wage freeze, we've seen increases given out to eight out of every 10 contracts over the past three years. The government kind of tinkers around the edges. As we proved through their own internal documents, they've actually got no plans to balance the budget.

Look, when I go back to my riding on Fridays and on the weekends, I have an opportunity to meet with a variety of folks who come into my office, or I'm out in the community, whether it be at Tim Hortons or at the No Frills in Elmira. I had a mother in, with three autistic children. She said, "I cannot get the supports that I need. We're on a wait-list. Why? Because they say that we have no money in the province of Ontario to help my children."

But yet, come election time, the government, the Liberal Party, announces that they're going to move or cancel two power plants. Now, they said it would cost us \$40 million. The Premier said "Oh, look, it's just \$40 million." The Auditor General came out and said—

Interiection

**Mr. Michael Harris:** look, Glen, Minister, you should really read the Auditor General's report. She'll tell you that you could—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'll remind the member that his comments come to the Speaker, not individual members.

1000

Mr. Michael Harris: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

If the minister has a few minutes today, he should read the Auditor General's report on the cancellation of those power plants. He will read in there that it didn't need to happen that way, but they were so obsessed with getting it out of the public realm into arbitration so that folks, come election time, weren't disputing the legal ramifications of this, and they took the bargaining chips the government had off the table. They could have just run the course here and the permitting wouldn't have happened, and Ontarians wouldn't have been out a billion and one but they're out a billion and one. That's what the auditor said. Those are the numbers from the Auditor General. Don't believe me, believe her. He should read that report to get a good idea of exactly what she said.

It's mothers like that who come to me and say, "How could they waste a billion and one to save a few Liberal seats, and my children, who have autism, can't get the supports that they need?" And the list goes on and on and on.

I had the CEO of KidsAbility in my office just last week, Linda Kenny. She was talking about our young children who are heading off to full-day kindergarten and who have developmental disabilities. They have learning issues, some that have never even been identified yet. I think for every one student they know about who goes through their program, whether it be just general learning disabilities, accessory disabilities, obviously symptoms of autism—for every one child they're working with, there are two or three more they've never even identified, and this obviously takes resources to help these kids.

She talked about a young child who, at the age of three, couldn't pick up his spoon to eat. And you know what? I have two young boys. They're going to be joining us this morning for question period. Lincoln is about four months and Murphy, he's two. He's eating now on his own which is nice to see. But I thought of that young boy who, at the dinner table with his family, can't eat by himself.

She was talking about how they brought a specialist in. They were helping him walk through things on his terms, and through that help, he's now able to eat on his own, pick up that spoon, and use those utensils. It's things like this—when we see a billion and one wasted, it's sad.

So to talk about an MPP salary freeze—hey, I'm all for it. But we've asked and we've pleaded with this government to make it fair for everyone: an across-the-board public sector wage freeze for everyone. What would that save you? Some \$350,000 for this bill; \$2 billion if we treated everyone equally—and at the end of the day, folks just say, "You know what, why pick on me?"

I had a meeting with the local teachers' union on Friday and they brought up Bill 115: "They were picking on us." I think if you said, "We're in a pinch here. We've spent loose and recklessly over the last 10 years. We have a \$12-billion deficit"—roughly \$12 billion a year is spent on servicing our debt. People can't believe when you tell them health care, education—and what's the third largest spending commitment in Ontario? To service our debt. I mean, sending the money overseas so that they can build their roads, educate their kids and take care of their seniors and health care system? It's asinine, as the member for Northumberland—Quinte West just recently stated. Who would have even thought that? It's insane. It's like they don't even open up the credit card

statement at the end of the month to know how long that will take to actually pay back.

We talk to job creators. They say, "Look, your province doesn't have their own financial house in order. That's too much of a risk, to come here and potentially shoulder their reckless spending on the backs of our investors." They just won't do it. Debt and deficits are a major and immediate threat to our province's ability to attract more jobs, as high taxes and user fees drive businesses out of the province.

You know what? I'll have to bring it up: I didn't have a BLT this morning—it sounded good. But yesterday we learned about the Liberal BLT, the budget-leaking team, and in there it talks about 39 announcements over the next 27 days to add \$5.7 billion in new spending. We're talking about \$350,000 this morning—really. Then we read of 39 announcements over 27 days, \$5.7 billion in new spending. It's crazy.

I was talking to my colleague from Durham, and we're going to miss him, whenever the next election comes. I know he won't be too far. I've been given great counsel, and the member for Durham has been a real mentor to me. I wanted to say this because I might not get another chance. As a new member, I came to Queen's Park, and I tell everybody, "If you want to learn how to do this job properly"—and I have enjoyed my opportunity as an opposition member to learn my role as an MPP. He's in the House all the time, and I'll tell you, the guy reads the bills thoroughly. He knows all the issues. So I've modelled what I have done by learning from members like the member for Durham. I know his son is now in Ottawa and he will have probably picked up a few of those things, too, and it will make him a great MPP. But I would like to thank the member for Durham for what he has taught me over the last two years. We will miss him for sure.

I wanted to get back to a recent announcement, last week. The Premier announced, after one of her ministers said that she was going to run for mayor of Brampton, that she wasn't just going to look to other ministers to fill that gap; she was going to actually replace her with not one but two people—two people. So the largest cabinet already-I think they outnumber the MPPs, cabinet ministers do. At a time when we're talking about an MPP wage freeze bill, she goes and she appoints not one but two people to replace one who is leaving. So what does that cost? It's an additional \$45,000, \$46,000 per MPP now to be a cabinet minister. You've got to go out and hire drivers in fancy cars. You've got to get staff. Not only that, but she kept the minister without—now, I did see him bring a portfolio into the Legislature this morning. I don't know what was in it. But she kept the minister without portfolio. Come on. What is going on here? People say, "You guys should take a wage freeze." That's fine. We'll do that; no problem. Then she turns around and she appoints two people to replace one, and leaves another one without a portfolio. I just don't get it, and I don't think people in my community of Kitchener-Conestoga get it either. Really, they just don't.

We're talking about the province's finances. I've talked about the \$5.7 billion in new spending. I just think it's important to go back to advice that they sought out from an economic expert in Ontario. His name was Don Drummond. I know they've forgotten about that guy. I still have the Drummond report in my office on its shelf. I don't know if the Drummond report is in any of their portfolios that they brought in this morning, but they should, when they get a chance, go back to that document each and every week.

Don Drummond laid out a list of things that the government could do to bring its spending under control. I want to give you 10 items from that list that he suggested that they do and which they've clearly ignored.

He said to reduce government spending in all but four ministries—all but four. So last budget, it didn't happen. Clearly, the BLT team has no intention of doing that going forward.

He said to make a clean break from corporate welfare to save \$2 billion to \$3 billion.

They're in Woodstock, I believe, today or tomorrow or this week, announcing hundreds of thousands of dollars for Sysco. Sysco is great food manufacturer—not a manufacturer, but I guess they deliver it across Ontario—a good employer, a huge facility in Woodstock, lots of good jobs. They're opening it this week. We congratulate them for coming to Ontario and investing there. But it's money for them after the fact. So don't swoop in and basically take credit for creating those jobs after it was a private firm that did so on its own.

He said to revamp the LHINs and break down bureaucratic silos in health care to save \$4 billion to \$6 billion. Health care being the number one expenditure in the province of Ontario, we have to address spending in health care, but clearly, that's not in this.

Scrap the \$1-billion Ontario Clean Energy Benefit. He said to modestly increase class sizes to save \$460 million. He said to eliminate 10,000 non-teaching positions to save \$600 million.

This is not me; this is Don Drummond, former chief economist to the TD Bank, somebody the Liberals had asked to put this together.

He goes on: comprehensive arbitration reform for government workers. I know my colleague from Simcoe-Grey put a bill forward on reforming arbitration, something that I know in my community of the region of Waterloo is so desperately needed, as salaries go up and settlements are given across the province that people just can't comprehend.

Significantly reform government worker pensions: I know, Madam Speaker, you've definitely worked on that in the past.

Use competition in awarding energy contracts. Whether it's in our own homes or—I toured a factory last week in Kitchener, and they talked about the fact that they were short \$1 million in predicting what their electricity spend would be last year—\$1 million. When you're looking at a global company that is headquartered in the United States, and they see that a plant in Ontario was \$1

million over budget on their hydro, they say, "What the heck is going on there? We might as well potentially move operations elsewhere." That's what companies have to consider. It's all about the numbers, the return on investment. Ontario has become an extremely expensive jurisdiction to operate in, but it's because of the reckless spending that we have seen over the last 10 years.

I think it's important that the Minister of Transportation is here. If he was listening to 570 News this morning, he would have heard a lead story on a critical piece of infrastructure in the province of Ontario for our community: Highway 7.

Look, I'll give you a bit of a history on this one. Highway 7 was promised in 2007. This is a road that has been long-needed for decades. So in 2010, the Minister of Government Services and the House leader came to the chamber of commerce and said, "We're out of money. We can't afford to do it. We just can't afford to do it." So they cancelled it.

Then in 2012, with a by-election happening in Kitchener-Waterloo, the Premier came to town and said, "Oh, look. Highway 7? It's back on. No problem; it's on, with construction to start in 2015."

Today, or yesterday, we saw, with the Liberal BLT team, that they're planning to come to Kitchener-Water-loo on April 18, I believe—that is probably now scheduled to change—to reannounce a recommitment, but construction won't start until 2016—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Speaker, just on a very small point of order: I do like the individual from Kitchener—Conestoga, but I do believe that he's wavering a little bit and getting beyond the scope of the bill. I'll seek your good guidance on this particular issue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being nearly 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to welcome my family to Queen's Park today: Sarah, Murphy over there, and Lincoln on his first visit to the Ontario Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

**Hon.** Teresa Piruzza: Good morning. It's my honour this morning to introduce Barb Holland, who is the chair of the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, here for OECTA day. Welcome, Barb.

Mr. Rob Leone: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to welcome Catholic educators to Queen's Park today. Many of us legislators took part in His Eminence Cardinal Collins's ceremony of the Eucharist today. Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce Jo-Anne Thibodeau, mother, and grandmother Jannot Thibodeau; they, of course, are related to our wonderful page Milana Thibodeau Morris, who is serving us exceedingly well in this Legislature this week and in other weeks.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also would like to introduce advocates for Catholic education who I'll be meeting with later today: Marshall Jarvis, the former president of OECTA; Anna da Silva; and the Reverend Marcel Damphousse. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to the meeting.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear buttons in recognition of Dig Safe Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to wear the buttons today. Do we agree? Agreed.

Further introductions.

**Hon. Teresa Piruzza:** Speaker, another point of order: I believe you'll find that we also have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for autism day. Do we agree? Agreed.

The Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to welcome to the Legislature executives from UCB, a leader in the pharmaceutical industry. Joining us here today are Jeffrey Wren, Jim Smyth, Hervé Lilliu and Robert Tam. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today William Stephen, senior historian of Rondeau Provincial Park and author of the mega-book Rondeau Forever, dedicated to the heritage Rondeau cottage community. By the way, Speaker, he was a contributing author to your Speaker's Book Award.

Also, I'd like to introduce Barry Fraser from Chatham, Bob Shepley from Huntsville, and Keith Graham. Thank you, gentlemen, and welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome today Mary Lou Mackie, the executive superintendent of the Waterloo Region District School Board.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would also like to introduce Catholic educators. I have James Ryan, president of the Catholic teachers; Marino Gazzola, president of Catholic trustees; and the entire Catholic education partnership, including Andrew Donihee, Colleen Landers, Anna da Silva, Elizabeth Crowe and Pat Daly. Welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm so pleased to welcome the chair of our Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, Patrick Daly, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Please join me in welcoming the grade 10 class from John Cabot Catholic Secondary School from my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South, Welcome to Oueen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the west chamber here, Rida Ali. She is a student from the University of Toronto and she is here to witness the theatre this morning, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I thought it was question period.

Further introductions? The member from Scarborough-Guildwood.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** It's my pleasure to welcome Liz Stewart and Jo-Ann Davis, who is the chair of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, and I'm pleased to have you here today.

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I think a lot of people have been introduced already, but if there's anybody here from the Catholic trustees or the Catholic teachers who haven't already been introduced, I would like to say welcome to everybody who is here from our valued Catholic education system.

But I do get to reintroduce Marino Gazzola because he's from Guelph. I'll introduce him as the chair of the Wellington Catholic board.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I just noticed Colleen Landers all the way from the city of Timmins, who is here, I imagine, for the same reason, but is also acting on a whole bunch of other things. So whatever you're here for, welcome.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to introduce Moji Agoro, my legislative assistant from Blackburn Hamlet, a graduate of Ottawa university, and from the great riding of Ottawa–Orleans. Moji, would you stand up?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** I'd like to introduce to this House a great number of students from Holy Name of Mary College School in Mississauga. They haven't arrived, but we welcome them to Queen's Park as they're waiting out by the door.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery members of the steering committee for the Macdonald Project. The purpose of this project is to commemorate and celebrate Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Thank you very much for being here.

For those who might not have had an opportunity to see this, in the main foyer is actually the display of the bust that has been asked by the committee to circulate around the province of Ontario, so welcome and thank you again.

The member from Leeds-Grenville on a point of order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Recently the government House leader accused the member from Nipissing of a breach of privilege. This was regarding the release of financial documents to this Legislature.

Yesterday, the chair of the Standing Committee on— Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Order, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not finished yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It doesn't matter. As a matter of fact, that's precisely why I'm standing. I've made a ruling on that. Thank you.

It is now time for question period.

## **ORAL QUESTIONS**

### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Given the OPP ITO's multiple references to David Nicholl in his alleged role as head of the Ontario public service IT department with respect to the deletion of emails and the destruction of hard drives in the former Premier's office, in particular his poor judgment and his gross insubordination to Peter Wallace, the cabinet secretary, and his disreputable orders to his staff, does the Premier agree that Mr. Nicholl should step aside as head of the public service's IT department until the end of the OPP investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite understands that there is an investigation ongoing. We learned of allegations last Thursday about a particular individual who was staff in the former Premier's office, and I really believe that we should let the investigation unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? 1040

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There are clear passages and exchanges that put Mr. Nicholl's impartiality in the OPS at risk. For example: "[A]fter the meeting on Jan. 30, Mr. Nicholl met with Thom Stenson, manager of information technology services for Cabinet Office, and Rolf Gitt, a senior analyst, and told them to ... give Mr. Livingston administrative rights to the computers. Mr. Nicholl told them the request came directly from the Premier's office."

But "Mr. Stenson told police he had never" heard of "such a request in the 27 years he worked for the" OPS "and that such a request is usually reserved for IT personnel." He said, "That was an unusual request and uh I don't think that's" been "done anywhere...."

Further, "Mr. Nicholl told police that Mr. Hume told him on Jan. 31 to go ahead and provide the access to Mr. Livingston. Mr. Hume does not recall the conversation or granting the approval."

Finally---

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Wendy Wai, the person at the centre of this scandal, said, "Mr. Nicholl gave me [some] sort of access but I didn't know anything about"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** —"what to do with it." These revelations are damning. Will you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to some of the details, but I will just say again, there is an investigation ongoing, and it is very important that all of us in this House, I believe, allow that investigation to unfold as it should. We have taken extraordinary actions to open up this process, to make sure that there was a committee in place with a scope that was able to look at all of the issues involved in the relocation of the gas plants. That

was something I took on, I committed to. I have done that. There is an investigation going on. We need to let it unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Premier, it is clear that this individual, Mr. Nicholl, has put his own personal and his friend David Livingston's political interests beyond that of the public service. There is, I think, a very clear line between being loyal to the public service and having integrity within the province and actually giving unfettered access to a rogue hacker to get inside the Premier's office, as this individual clearly did and as the OPP ITO clearly demonstrates.

I am asking the Premier to be responsible today. I am asking her to put the people first. I am asking her to do the right thing and have this individual step aside until the justice committee completes its work and until the OPP concludes their investigation. That is the right thing to do. Will you do the right thing or will you continue to do what Liberals do best and try to hide from the public?

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think we all enjoyed that episode of Nepean-Carleton CSI, but the fact of the matter is, there is an OPP investigation going on, and I think we leave it up to the OPP to conduct that investigation. If the honourable member wants to take a look at the court document that she's quoting, I would direct her to appendix D, "Involved Persons." There is one person that the allegations, which are not proven, are directed against. That's the former chief of staff of Premier Dalton Mc-Guinty. Other people involved that she's raising today let's look at the list. We have the member of provincial Parliament for North Bay, the member of provincial Parliament for Cambridge, the member of provincial Parliament for Toronto-Danforth. The point being, there is a long list of individuals that the OPP have spoken with to reach a conclusion, which is in this document, something that has not been proven yet against the former chief of staff.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm beginning to hear some heckles that I find very, very dangerously close to unparliamentary, and I will call the person on it the next time I hear it. You cannot say indirectly what you're not supposed to say directly, and it's not going to happen.

New question.

## **POWER PLANTS**

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. There are a number of similarities between how you handled the gas plant scandal and how you handle other people who challenge you. You and your cabinet said the gas plant cancellations would cost \$40 million, but the Auditor General said it was \$1.1 billion. You and your cabinet said, "We have all the documents," but the privacy commissioner said documents were destroyed by Liberal operatives. Now the OPP tells us that 24 computers were wiped clean right in your own offices.

When our leader, Tim Hudak, and our energy critic, the member from Nepean-Carleton, called you out, you ran to the lawyers to silence them. You don't want people

to know the truth— *Interjections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will withdraw.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you will also come to order.

Carry on, please.

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** You don't seem to want people to know the truth or for us to get to the truth. My simple question, Premier: What is it that you're hiding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Government Services is going to want to comment, but I want to just say that when I came into this role, I said that we were going to open up this process, we were going to have all of the questions that were being asked answered, we were going to provide documentation. And that's what we've been doing.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Beyond that, we have changed the rules around document retention, around training of staff. We have opened up this process. We have worked with communities to change the rules around siting energy infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have done what I said we were going to do, and we have gone beyond that. I am happy any day to debate matters of truth, to look at the facts and to have those discussions. I welcome that debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I'm sensing a pattern here. During the gas plant scandal, you knew one thing but told the public the opposite. Now you're trying to silence our leader, Tim Hudak, and our energy critic. When the member from Aurora exposed that your government had lost control of Ornge, out came the lawyers from high-profile Liberals. When I disclosed the financial mess you've gotten us into, you came after me with what have been proven to be false accusations, as confirmed at the estimates committee last night.

Now, several hard-working, conscientious people have come forward because they're tired of being used as political pawns, and you go on a witch hunt. Premier, this is not something a witch hunt or a scapegoat will solve. You will do anything to protect yourself. I ask you again: Specifically, what is it that you're hiding?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very proud of the fact that the Premier sought legal advice, because the facts are very, very clear. We have a court document that was released last week, which contains very serious allegations, yet unproven—I think we all have to be very prudent—against an individual over some activities that happened under the former Premier's watch and under the former chief of staff's watch. When the Leader of the Opposition tries to claim anything different, he is not saying it based on fact. I am very pleased that the Premier of this province would call him out on it.

You know what? I encourage the honourable member to look at the court documents and see the case that is there. He will realize the error of his ways. We certainly look forward to an apology from him and for them to cease and desist with what they're bringing forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, you just claimed to be new and different. But after lawsuits, false contempt threats and witch hunts, it's clear you've changed. You now will do anything to protect yourself. On a personal note, I would have expected this sort of partisan scheme from former Premier Dalton McGuinty. No member of the civil service should be put in a situation where they are asked to do the pre-election promotional work of the Liberal Party. By being involved in this scheme, you, Premier Wynne, have squandered any benefit of doubt you may have once had. There's a pattern here of delete, destroy and deny. We saw it through the gas plant hearings. We're seeing it in your Pan Am debacle. We saw how you handled the two finance fumbles.

Premier, I'll ask you again: What is it that you're hiding from us?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. The members will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The member has the gall to talk about denying. You know what? Perhaps he should look at one section of the court document I'd like to quote to him here. I believe it's a sentence on line 153. It begins, "In June 2011, Greenfield South Power Corporation began the construction of the power plant in Mississauga. In September 2011, a provincial election campaign began and the Liberal Party of Ontario promised to cancel the construction of the plant in Mississauga if they were elected. The Ontario Progressive Conservatives and the

New Democratic Party also made similar promises if elected."

On October 6 "the Liberal Party won the provincial election." They "won the seat in Mississauga."

Now, wait for it, folks. "Even though"-

Interjections.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Wait for it. "Even though they made the same promise during the election, the opposing parties accused the Liberal Party of cancelling the power plant only to secure a seat in Parliament."

1050

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier may have showed up yesterday, but she failed to answer many questions. I guess there's a reason it's not called answer period, Speaker. I'm hoping she can do better today. Can the Premier tell us what services Peter Faist was providing to the Liberal Party up until last Sunday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said yesterday, the individual about whom the leader of the third party is talking was someone who did provide services—occasional services—to the Liberal Party up until Sunday, when we discovered that he was still providing those services. He had not been providing services to my office or to the government, Mr. Speaker. Those services had ended in January 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has argued that Mr. Faist is not under investigation and there's nothing unusual or suspicious about the fact that he was paid by the Ontario Liberals as recently as last week. If Mr. Faist was doing nothing wrong at all, if nothing wrong was being done, why was he then suddenly fired this weekend, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have attempted over the last couple of days and last Thursday, when these allegations were first made, to simply make it clear what we know and what we have done. The fact is, last Thursday, when the allegations were found, we did an internal investigation. There were allegations about one individual who was the chief of staff in the former Premier's office. When we discovered that this man, this company that had been involved providing services in the former Premier's office, was still providing services to the OLP, we terminated that relationship. That happened on Sunday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

**Ms.** Andrea Horwath: Speaker, then I just want to make sure, will the Premier at least tell us specifically whether his alleged role in the illegal destruction of gas plant records was a factor in his termination on Sunday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To be clear, the allegations were made, and they centre on the chief of staff of the former Premier, Mr. Speaker. We have said that repeatedly, and the leader of the third party knows that that is what is in the documentation. We determined that this

company was still providing services periodically to the Liberal Party, and that relationship was terminated. The police are doing their work, and we need to let that work continue. We need to let that investigation, we need to let that process, unfold.

#### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. Police records indicate that government staff were concerned—they were concerned—by David Livingston's attempts to wipe computers clean with the alleged assistance of Peter Faist. Did any staff raise these concerns with the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wasn't the Premier at that point, Mr. Speaker. There was another Premier; there was a former Premier. The former Premier was in the office when—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The allegations, as the leader of the third party knows, are centred on the chief of staff of the former Premier. That person did not work for me, has not worked for me and has not been in my office since I took office on February 11, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, last June, when the privacy commissioner first raised serious concerns about the illegal deletion of emails and computer records, the Premier said she'd fix the problem, yet the Premier also says that she was as surprised as anyone about allegations in the OPP documents nearly six months later. If the Premier was taking steps to fix the problem, how then is it possible that she's never heard one single thing about an unauthorized individual roaming the halls and accessing people's computers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: What I did was I took the advice of the privacy commissioner, and we've taken a number of actions to make sure that document retention in this government is as it should be. We sent a directive—I sent a directive—to all political staff. We developed mandatory training programs. We appointed chiefs of staff accountable for record-keeping. We improved archiving requirements. My office worked with the Integrity Commissioner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The accountability act would prohibit the willful deletion of records. That is the action that we have taken.

I will just say that on June 13, 2013, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, who is the Information and Privacy Commissioner, said, "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people have heard promises of change and accountability from this Premier, but for families stuck with the bill for this scandal, the

song remains the same, unfortunately. When I said I wanted the Premier to show up for work, I assumed that she would actually do her job and answer some straightforward questions.

Does the Premier expect anyone in Ontario to believe that over an entire year, not a single human being—not one single person—raised the issue of Mr. Livingston or Mr. Faist or the activities that were going on right under her nose?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, the chief of staff of the former Premier was the chief of staff of the former Premier; he did not work for me.

I just want to let the leader of the third party know what Dr. Cavoukian has said. Again, she's the Information and Privacy Commissioner. On July 26, 2013, she said, "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things. The government is dedicated to opening up access to government data."

That is what we're dedicated to. That is why we have made the changes that we have made. That is why we will continue to make the changes that will hold us accountable and will provide the opportunity for the public and members of the opposition to have the information that they ask for. That was our commitment, and that is what we have delivered on.

#### POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday when you were asked about your working relationship with Peter Faist you said, "I had not learned of his existence until the last few days." I hope you can see why no one believes you. We're talking about the life partner of the former deputy chief of staff, who worked for both your caucus and your party.

Now I understand if the Premier is suffering from another one of her bouts of selective amnesia—we all know that this happens quite frequently when she's under pressure—but I'll give you another chance to set the record straight today. Premier, do you seriously contend that you just learned of the former deputy chief of staff's boyfriend, who was employed by your caucus and your party over the course of four years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader. Hon. John Milloy: I may have made light in previous answers, but this is a very serious matter. I refer to that appendix, where there is one individual—the former chief of staff—who police are looking into. There are allegations that are not yet proven. There are all sorts of other individuals involved, and there are reputations on the line. This is a police investigation. For that honourable member to stand up here today and try to enter into a serious matter, a serious investigation, is quite frankly beneath him.

It's really the whole party. This is supposed to be the party of Bill Davis. Look at what some of the media are saying about what they're doing. The Globe and Mail, April 1: "The Conservative leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to back them up are

reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

I would say that-

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: When the Premier can choose when and when not to remember critical facts, I think it's clear that she's no longer suffering from selective amnesia; she's suffering from the inability to tell the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

So last week we learned that senior Liberal staffers in your government right now, including Lauren Ramey and Jason Lagerquist, told the OPP that they knew their computers had been tampered with. Yet you continue to claim that you had no idea what was happening in your own office as evidence needed for a criminal investigation was being destroyed all around you.

I would like to know when this information came to light to key members of your transition team, including Tom Allison, Monique Smith and Greg Sorbara. When did these individuals become aware that Peter Faist gained access to 24 government computers in your office, and when did they learn that email information related to the gas plant scandal had been destroyed?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, this isn't a game; this is an OPP investigation. There is one person who has been named, the former chief of staff. There are other people who, according to the court document, have been interviewed or spoken with. I think the honourable member, if he truly is an honourable member, will allow the OPP to do their work, because the fact of the matter is that their tactics so far—let me share some other quotes

The Ottawa Citizen yesterday said that the PCs "asked repeatedly" whether Premier Wynne's computer was among those wiped, "which makes little sense: the police are crystal clear" that they are interested in computers in Premier McGuinty's office, where Premier Wynne did not work.

The Toronto Star: "Hudak went far beyond what the facts show." The Toronto Star again: "Yet every time he"—the Leader of the Opposition—"steps into a room of reporters who have actually read the police document—and can see how he is deliberately misreading it—the Tory leader risks diminishing his long-term credibility."

That is what the media are saying about their-

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

## POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, a question through you to the Premier: Is the Premier aware that one of the key people interviewed by the OPP over the deletion of government records has been put in charge of keeping government records while that investigation is ongoing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the honourable member should look at appendix D of it. It highlights one individual who is the subject of these allegations, the former chief of staff to the former Premier. It mentions other individuals who are involved in this, including the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Let us allow the police to do their work. They put forward a document which was very clear that they have an interest in the former chief of staff. They are serious allegations—everyone admits that—but they are simply allegations, and I think it would be the prudent course for all of us to respect the OPP's work, to allow the OPP to reach their conclusions, and, from there, to see where it takes us in terms of the justice system. That is the tradition of this House, and that honourable member is undermining it with his questions and allegations here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My, my, my, Speaker. It may be that the Premier is aware that I never had a chance to chat with the OPP, but I would be happy to talk with them and fill them in on my perspective any time.

How does the Premier explain putting one of the key figures in the ongoing police investigation in charge of keeping government records?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there is an OPP investigation going on. I have read that document. It's available. I tell the honourable member, it's available on the Star's website. Perhaps, if he doesn't have an account, someone will lend them their password—sorry about that

But the fact of the matter is, what that document says is that there is one individual who they believe may have—they are allegations—committed a very serious breach, and that is the former chief of staff. There are dozens of other people that they perhaps have interviewed or who have come into the story. They are in the process by going to court and talking about one individual, and that's it. To stand up here with these drive-by smears about the other people named in this document, which, as I say, includes himself, is beneath the office that he holds.

## **AUTISM TREATMENT**

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, I am privileged to meet families and to listen to their concerns. One concern that I frequently hear from parents is that they want to know that the right services and supports are in place for their children.

This becomes even more important if their child is living with autism. We know the prevalence of autism is increasing. As a government, we must continue to take action to help families that face these additional challenges.

Can the minister please tell me what we are doing as a government to ensure that autism services are continually improving and expanding so that they are made available to more young people and their families?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I thank the member for her question, especially today, World Autism Awareness Day, as we know. Thank you to all the members for wearing the ribbons today as we move on with autism.

I've met some remarkable young people with autism and their families, so I'm certainly aware of the challenges that the families and individuals face. Each child with autism is unique, and we require unique services.

Unfortunately, we know as well that the prevalence of the disease continues to grow. The CDC reports now that one in 68 children will be diagnosed; not that long ago it was one in 150, so it is an increase in our numbers.

While we continue to increase our investments, we know that there is more work to be done. We are currently reviewing the advice of our clinical expert committee in conjunction with what we heard from our families. This advice will be critical as we move forward to ensure our families and children are properly supported.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Minister, thank you for that answer. I, too, have met these remarkable young people who have autism in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. The people of Scarborough–Guildwood will be happy to know that we will be following the advice of experts and families to address some of the challenges faced by families caring for young people with autism.

As a government, it's important that we continue to listen to their concerns and find ways to deliver services more effectively, and reduce wait-lists. In Ontario, there has been real progress over the last decade in improving diagnoses and bolstering individual services. While the prevalence of autism is increasing, our government continues to increase our investments. I know that we have recently taken a number of steps to help children with autism.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government currently doing to help children and youth with autism?

**Hon. Teresa Piruzza:** Again, thank you for the question. I will be meeting with many from Autism Ontario this evening.

Today, we are launching the autism parent resource toolkit. This online resource will help increase parents' and caregivers' understanding of autism and the range of programs and supports available for children and youth and their families. The kit is a one-stop resource to help families identify, plan for and access programs and supports for their child, to help them navigate the many great programs and services that we have.

We've also recently announced, as you know, our new Special Needs Strategy, which will also help families caring for young people with autism. As part of the strategy, we'll be introducing a new developmental screen to help identify risks to a child's development as soon as possible, which is absolutely critical. This will help connect families sooner to the services they need. Through this strategy and all our connections, we will ensure that our families and children with autism are properly supported

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you named your transition team on January 29, 2013. David Livingston and your transition lead, Monique Smith, were said to have had close frequent contact. We are here to represent the people of Ontario and they want to know why you have not asked Ms. Smith or any of your senior transition staff if they knew about Peter Faist's deletion of emails.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, this has come about because of a document provided by the police to the courts that was made public last week. The document is very clear that it involves allegations—unproven allegations; we have to be very careful—against a former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty about events that took place under the former Premier's watch. Those are the facts of that court document. I believe it is 111 pages, and I invite the honourable member to read it. In fact, I invite all honourable members to read it because the reviews out there aren't that great.

Let me tell you what-

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: I'll keep going.

Let me tell you what the Toronto Star also said yesterday: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's premiership."

The Globe and Mail had an editorial yesterday: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The minister is reading selective passages. Here is the truth, Premier: You keep insisting the problem was a lack of rules, but your own party introduced legislation to outlaw the deletion of official records. You just choose to ignore it. Premier, the problem here isn't the absence of rules, it's the absence of character.

You say you've answered tough questions but you refuse to search out answers for yourself. The gas plant scandal derailed the former government.

How can it be that you never even asked your senior team about the status and whereabouts of gas plants? Was your guiding policy "don't ask don't tell"?

1110

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member mentions a piece of legislation that, in fact, her party voted against. So I don't think we're going to be getting any—listen, let me continue with some more of the quotes of how your version of events is playing out there.

The Leader of the Opposition: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is on thin legal ice"—the Globe and Mail editorial yesterday.

The Leader of the Opposition's "claim that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers, when there is no evidence to support such an allegation, goes too far"—the Globe and Mail yesterday.

The Leader of the Opposition's "reckless allegations against Wynne are reminders of previous mistakes"—the Globe and Mail yesterday.

We have the Ottawa Citizen, Mr. Speaker: "Trail of evidence in gas plant probe ends before Wynne's government starts"—March 28.

"Detectives have found no evidence that any computers in Premier Kathleen Wynne's office were accessed"—Ottawa Citizen, March 28.

Toronto Star, March 29: "A close reading of the 111 pages of OPP documents provides no hint yet of any impropriety when [Wynne] was Premier."

Mr. Speaker, I can go on.

#### POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is to the Premier. David Livingston went to long lengths to destroy something on the computers in the Premier's office. According to the OPP, he was doing this in February and March 2013, after the Premier won the leadership. What was on the computers that David Livingston and Peter Faist were erasing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we're hearing Conservative CSI; we've got NDP CSI. I mean, this is a serious matter. Let us allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. They went to court in order to get warrants, and a document was filed with the court which was subsequently made public. That document is very clear: There is one individual, the former chief of staff to the former Premier, against whom there are allegations yet unproven. I think the prudent course would be to allow the investigation to move forward.

But you know—and perhaps I have to wait for the supplementary—I'm happy to read some quotes into the record about their performance on this. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, I'll wait for the supplementary, as I see you signalling that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good idea. Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again to the Premier: The OPP seem confident that they have software that will be able to recover what was deleted on some of these files. Now, my question to the Premier is, isn't she concerned about what we will be able to find once the OPP is able to retrieve these files? Does she have anything to say with respect to that?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me continue.

Toronto Star, March 30: The leader of the NDP "indulged in conventional opposition mischief by implying

police were 'now focusing on questions about the period after you were sworn in and became Premier'—a clear misreading of the OPP documents."

As I said, we have 111 pages which point out clearly that there is an interest in pursuing allegations against one individual—the former Premier's former chief of staff—over events that took place under his watch. These are unproven allegations, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about people's reputations. We are talking about a complicated matter which is being looked into by the Ontario Provincial Police. I think the prudent course for all members of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, is to allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work and to not interfere through questions like this in the Legislature.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH**

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. In May 2012, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced that the federal government would stop funding to the Experimental Lakes Area in northern Ontario and close it down.

The ELA is the only freshwater research facility of its kind, and it is vital to researchers in Ontario, Canada and around the world. It has been operating for over 45 years, and some of the experiments there have continued for decades, providing invaluable research.

As someone who is a strong advocate for the environment, it is important to me that research like this continues, and I was apprehensive when the federal government announced that it was pulling out all of its financial support and was planning to close down the facility.

Yesterday, I was pleased to hear that Ontario signed a long-term agreement with the International Institute for Sustainable Development as the new operator.

Speaker, could the minister please tell the members of the House about the important research that is being conducted at the Experimental Lakes Area?

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to rise in the House today, and I want to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for asking this important question. The member is quite right: The Experimental Lakes Area is a world-renowned research station that provides us with invaluable data for the scientific community. Unfortunately, it was something the federal government was prepared to walk away from and close, but our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, stepped up to make sure that this would not happen in our province.

This facility attracts scientists from around the world who conduct research that informs pollution reduction, climate change strategies and protection of freshwater ecosystems. In the 1960s, research at this facility determined that phosphates were a killing pollutant in our lakes. In the 1970s, they determined the impacts of acid rain with respect to the impacts on freshwater lakes.

Scott Vaughan, the president of the IISD, had this to say: "This agreement opens a fresh, new chapter in the life of the Experimental Lakes Area and the promise of many important and exciting research possibilities ahead...." Our government recognizes the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the minister for informing the members of this House about this unparalleled research facility. Undoubtedly, it is a very important research facility, and I'm glad to hear our government has signed an agreement with the IISD to keep the ELA operating. I was pleased to hear yesterday that, through this long-term agreement, our government will provide funding of up to \$2 million per year to ensure that this research can continue. As well, I understand that, as part of this agreement, Ontario will review all prospective experiments as a member of the ELA advisory board and ensure that its research is carried out in an environmentally responsible way.

Can the minister please update the members of the House about the timeline of the agreement for the Experimental Lakes Area and let us know if the facility will be open for the 2014 field season?

Hon. David Orazietti: Thank you again to the member from Ottawa–Orléans. Since the 1960s, the ELA has been important to identifying emerging threats to our environment and to understanding important challenges to our ecosystems. I'm certainly pleased and thrilled that the researchers will be able to begin their work in time for the 2014 field season. In particular, they will be conducting some research with respect to tiny particles referred to as nanoparticles and nanosilver with regard to garment manufacturing and how that impacts our environment.

Dr. Orihel said this in the Globe and Mail: "I'm just thrilled. I am so happy, I am speechless right now." She said, "We've...been working to rebuild" the ELA. "Initially, we had hoped to convince the Harper government to reinstate the federal funding. Basically, that was never going to happen and we needed" a solution.

The solution is right here with our government, this Premier, and she made it happen.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Your government is acting like a government with something to hide. The alleged activities of Mr. Faist is the latest and largest bombshell to drop. But as we've seen, you have plenty of secrets, like the secret budget deficits, like the secret BLTs, the secret leaking teams. We know you wanted to hide the details of the gas plant scandal that ended up costing taxpayers \$1.1 billion.

But who knows what else is on those hard drives, Premier? Can you tell this House if Mr. Faist, or anyone else for that matter, deleted other secrets, like Ornge secrets or eHealth secrets, that the people of Ontario deserve to know?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, I think the prudent course is to allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

In terms of opening up the government, I am very, very proud of the record of our Premier when it comes to opening up the government. When it comes to the gas plant issue, as has been pointed out in this Legislature, it was this individual who wrote to the Auditor General, even before she became Premier, to ask for him to look into the matter. She re-struck the committee. As a government, we have provided over 326,000 pages to the committee, including 30,000 pages from the Premier's office. We've taken action, both of a legislative and non-legislative variety, in terms of addressing issues around document retention.

If any party should be explaining, then perhaps the Conservatives should be explaining why their candidates never appeared in front of the justice committee to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: You talk a lot about transparency and openness and what you aspire to do. But, Premier, I can tell you, Ontario tax-payers are worried that their Premier is either incompetent or complicit. You can talk the talk, but you don't seem to want to walk the walk. But to be fair, you said earlier, just moments ago—and I paraphrase—you are happy to debate the truth any day.

1120

Premier, I'm asking you, not the House leader, in the name of openness and transparency, can you confirm today that files related to other scandals, like eHealth and Ornge were not also destroyed?

Hon. John Milloy: Let's talk about openness. Just for once, will the opposition party admit what we all know from YouTube, from press releases, from the Twitterverse, that in the last election it was the Progressive Conservative Party that promised if they were elected they would cancel the gas plant. For heaven's sake, the police acknowledged in the document, again, that on October 6, "the Liberal Party won the provincial election... The Liberal Party won the seat of Mississauga. Even though they made the same promise during the election, the opposing parties accused the Liberal Party of cancelling the power plant only to secure a seat in Parliament."

It's time that the Progressive Conservative—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

**Hon. John Milloy:** It's time that the Progressive Conservatives acknowledge the fact that they made the exact same promise going into the last election.

#### NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Serious unanswered questions were raised by consumer

groups at the Ontario Energy Board hearings looking into Enbridge's request for a 40% increase in natural gas prices. These groups have requested special sessions to examine in detail whether the company acted responsibly in its practices. But their requests for these special sessions were denied by the board.

Can this government explain why their agency, which is supposed to protect Ontario families, seniors and businesses, refused to take a serious look at this unprecedented 40% rate hike application?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the severe weather conditions, the cold of this past winter, did increase the demand for gas across North America. This was not just an Ontario situation. This was a North American situation, and it resulted in higher prices across the continent. We have to look at what has happened in the context of the weather and what was happening in other jurisdictions.

We understand the impact that that has on families. That's why it's very important that people know that there are a significant number of programs in place to reduce the costs of energy: the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program—that one in particular provides financial support for families having trouble paying their bills in the immediate term.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Here is what the Consumers Council of Canada wrote in its submissions on March 18 regarding the application for a 40% increase: "The board needs to fully understand why these amounts are so large and what specific factors contributed to the accumulation of these amounts." But the Ontario Energy Board flatly refused the council's request.

Why is the government content to stand on the sidelines and allow this outrageous increase without any serious examination of whether it is warranted or not?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say that I share the concern—because of the shortage and because of the weather—that there was an increase across the province and across the continent. I'm very well aware of that, and I share that concern.

But in terms of what the OEB decided and what the groups who came to speak to the OEB asked for—consumer groups who intervened in the process, the Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition and Consumers Council of Canada. They submitted that the board should consider approving the rates on an interim basis and then allow more consideration for smoothing. And that is in fact what the OEB decided. My understanding is that the submissions that were made to the OEB in this difficult situation, because of the cold winter, were heard and that that is what the OEB decided.

#### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario's ability to compete on

a global scale in this knowledge-driven economy depends greatly on our ability to harness our research strength and enhance the aptitude of our post-secondary students to deliver on our entrepreneurial ideas. I know that I have many talented young people in Scarborough–Agincourt who require the necessary resources to move their ideas into the market and generate significant job creation.

At 64%, Ontario has one of the highest rates of postsecondary education in the world, with almost a third of Canada's youth-owned enterprises located here in Ontario. This means that we need to provide the best emerging young entrepreneurs with the guidance and assistance they need. Therefore, it's also important that we provide a variety of programs to help these young entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to support the transfer of knowledge and information from post-secondary to the economy?

**Hon. Reza Moridi:** I thank the member from Scarborough-Agincourt for that very important question.

Our government recognizes the importance of connecting youth with the tools, experiences and entrepreneurial support they need to succeed in employment and also to establish their own businesses.

Our youth innovation fund does this by helping postsecondary students commercialize their innovative ideas. Through this fund, we have invested \$20 million into our campus-linked accelerators to provide workspace, investments and mentorship to our youth, and a \$10-million investment in our internships program that provides graduate and PhD students in our universities to work on joint industry-academia projects.

Helping young people find jobs is part of the Ontario government's economic plan to invest in people to create jobs and help them in their everyday lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to hear that our government will be continuing to invest in programs that support our youth. With the increase in competition, it is now more important than ever to provide the youth with the training, tools and skills they need. That's why I'm doing my part, Mr. Speaker. I'm hosting a youth entrepreneurship workshop this Saturday to support Agincourt youth.

Our province's success is directly linked to the success of our young people. It is imperative that we build a strong foundation for young entrepreneurs throughout the entire commercialization process, from the development of prototypes to sourcing the first customers and solving real business needs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What other initiatives does our government plan to have in place to support young entrepreneurs with their innovative ideas?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that important question. I also want to congratulate her on her initiative. Last year, I actually attended that event, and it was a very successful event.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping our students and young people succeed by providing programs that develop their entrepreneurial spirit. These programs provide our youth with the opportunity to explore various facets of entrepreneurship.

Examples include our Summer Company program, which provides hands-on business and training mentoring for our students, and our Experiential Learning Program, which helps science, technology and engineering students receive the training and experience they need to succeed and turn their ideas into commercial products and services.

This government understands the important role youth play in our economic growth, and we help them to find jobs and participate in the economic growth of our province.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. As you will know, Ontario's Auditor General has estimated that your political decision to cancel the power plants will cost taxpayers over \$1.1 billion, further burdening our children and our grandchildren with your political debt.

We also know that computer hacker and data mastermind Peter Faist worked for your caucus and your party, with you as leader, for over one year. In fact, even the police who are investigating the matter have said that Faist was the guy who was hired to illegally wipe these computers clean.

Premier, people at home are demanding accountability. Why are you more interested in burying this scandal and protecting your own political interests than you are about getting to the bottom of it and holding people to account?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader. Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, sometimes you just don't know where to begin, but let's go back to the facts—something that they don't care about over there—and that is: There was a document that was produced in court, that was made public last week, which talked about an individual—the former chief of staff—against whom there are serious accusations for some activities that happened under his watch and under the watch of the former Premier. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker, and standing up with question after question doesn't change those facts.

#### 1130

Again, you're not doing well out there. Let me share some of the quotes again. The Globe and Mail yesterday: "The Conservative Leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to back them up are reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

The Ottawa Citizen yesterday: "[The PCs] asked repeatedly whether Wynne's computer was among those wiped, which makes little sense: The police are crystal clear that they're interested in the computers in McGuinty's office, where Wynne did not work."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: I don't know how you and your senior transition team were involved in the illegal document destruction that the OPP is now investigating, but my hunch and certainly that of the literally thousands of Ontario residents who have contacted my office alone regarding this matter is that where there is smoke, there is fire.

Ontario residents want someone to be-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, Ontario residents want someone to be held accountable, and they are asking for people to be thrown into jail over this. You became Premier on February 11, 2013, and at the same time, computer hacker and data guru Peter Faist was working away for the Liberal Party, hired to illegally wipe clean a series of computers and email accounts, destroying important public documents and records.

Premier, how much time do you spend each day trying

to cover up---

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Stop the clock. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker: These aren't my words. This is how you guys are doing out there with the media. Let's go to the Toronto Star yesterday: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show." Toronto Star yesterday: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's Premiership." The Globe and Mail editorial yesterday-I commend it to everyone to read it in full, but let's give you a few highlights: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is on thin legal ice." It goes on to say that the Leader of the Opposition's "claim that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers, when there is no evidence to support such an allegation, goes too far." It goes on to say that the Leader of the Opposition's "reckless allegations against [Premier] Wynne are reminders of previous mistakes."

Let the facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker, I invite the members to review the document and the—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. New question?

#### **HEALTH CARE**

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, it seems that each week, New Democrats are standing up holding this government to account for deep cuts to health care in London. Last week, we highlighted the crisis in mental health services. Before that, we raised concerns about cuts to St. Joseph's Health Care. Now Londoners are bracing for more cutbacks, this time at London Health

Sciences Centre, including the loss of 27 nurses and 41 cleaners.

Does the minister truly believe that the elimination of these nursing and cleaning positions will not have an impact on hands-on quality care in our community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I would like to know from the member opposite and from her party is whether or not they support our transformation in health care. Our system is under transformation. We are moving services out of hospital where it's appropriate and safe to do so. This transformation involves really building up community supports so that people can go home from hospital as soon as they're safely able to do that.

This transformation is working. We are seeing the results of those investments in the community. Our hospitals are also working. I've never said this is easy for hospitals, but the hospitals themselves support this transformation. In fact, I was very pleased, when London Health Sciences Centre went out with this announcement, that they made very clear that these changes would have no impact on patient care.

Transformation is under way. We need to support transformation if we care about universal, single-tier health care.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary? The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Nurses have been sounding alarm bells about the quality of care in London for almost two years. They have lodged hundreds of complaints about inadequate care levels, and now things are going to get much worse with these 27 nurses being laid off. The hospital is facing deep deficits and they have no choice but to make cuts to patient care and hospital cleanliness.

At what point will this minister realize that it's misleading to tell Londoners—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I withdraw.

At what point will this minister realize that continually sending this message to Londoners that patient care won't be affected in the face of more layoffs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** More layoffs won't affect patient care?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Well, I think once again we have to go to the facts. The facts are that no layoffs are anticipated as a result of this plan.

When it comes to nurses in Ontario, we now have 20,500 more nurses working than we had just 10 years ago. We are continuing to invest in nursing. We are continuing to bring our hospitals so that they are safe and they are effective, and when patients can receive services outside the hospital, that's where they prefer to receive those services.

Speaker, I perhaps will send this over to the member opposite. I think it's important that she know what is going on in London. What is happening in London is that

we are investing more in the community and that hospitals are becoming more efficient.

#### **FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN**

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, every year your ministry provides funding to school boards through the Grants for Student Needs that supports our quality education workers in addition to important programs and infrastructure projects. This funding is critical to ensuring we continue to make progress in student achievement and build our reputation for international success. However, I understand there have been some changes as of late.

Minister, can you please inform this House what the changes are in this year's Grants for Student Needs and how those changes will impact schools, students and families in my community?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for that question. Education is one of our most valued services, and Ontarians expect our government to invest wisely in our schools and students. Over the past 10 years, Ontario has become a global leader in education and a highly successful model for other jurisdictions. We're very proud of our education record.

For the 2014-15 school year, we are providing stable funding through the Grants for Student Needs of \$22.5 billion to help boards keep up with costs, while also providing increased funding to complete the rollout in September of full-day kindergarten. We have also committed to a three-year investment in ongoing school renewal of approximately \$1.25 billion to make sure that things like roofs and boilers get replaced.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for that response, Minister. My community has been pleased to welcome full-day kindergarten over the last four years and is looking forward to this upcoming September, which will be the final year of the rollout for this program. In my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, 17 more schools will offer the program beginning in the next school year. As of this coming fall, my riding will already have full-day kindergarten in 51 schools that will serve almost 4,800 students in 192 classes.

We know full-day learning is the best start we can give our kids and it is one of the most important investments we can make in Ontario's future prosperity. Can the minister please update this House on the status of the rollout of full-day kindergarten across Ontario?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I'm delighted that we're going to be able to complete the rollout of full-day kindergarten this September. When we finish the rollout this September, we expect we'll have about 265,000 children in full-day kindergarten taking advantage of the program.

One of the changes this year is that the funding is no longer outside the regular Grants for Student Needs. We've rolled the funding for full-day kindergarten inside the Grants for Student Needs, which signals to the school

board sector, many of whom are here today, that this makes the program permanent and that the full-day kindergarten students will be funded like every other single student in Ontario schools.

#### TABLING OF REPORT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the members and for that matter the public that I have tabled Ontario's long-term report on the economy with the House just moments ago. This report is an essential part of our government's commitment to greater openness and is one more part of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act that our government introduced in 2004. Thank you.

#### **VISITORS**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax-Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to welcome to the Legislature today Pickering page Simon Hopkins's mother, Fiona Hopkins; his father, Duncan Hopkins; his brother, Colin Hopkins; and grandparents Dianne and Graham Kinghorn. They're sitting in the members' gallery today. I'm sure Simon is honoured to have his family here this morning showing their support at the Legislature as he fulfils his role as page on this special day as page captain. I welcome you all to Queen's Park.

I have to tell you I share with my colleague in Pickering-Scarborough East, in that Simon goes to William Dunbar school in her riding and the family lives in my riding—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that you would want me to introduce Kathy Burtnik, the chair of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, who is in the members' gallery.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, for the record, the standing orders are fairly clear that you cannot say anything that is not true in this House. The government House leader repeated today that New Democrats actually said during the last election that we would cancel those gas plants. I just want to read the quote in order to clarify that New Democrats have said what they would not do. Both Hudak—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

The member from Leeds-Grenville on a point of order

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to

freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing so that we can freeze everyone's pay across the entire broader public sector and not just MPPs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is seeking unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing so that we freeze everyone's pay across the public sector.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to introduce a number of visitors with us in the west and east galleries and a number who will be introduced later as well on the occasion of Ontario One Call. There's Ben Hamilton from Ontario One Call, Lyne McMurchie from Enbridge Gas Distribution, Damian Edwin from Enbridge Gas Distribution, and David Donovan from Enbridge Gas Distribution. We welcome them all here to Queen's Park today for this legislation.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm here to introduce some members of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance who are here today to celebrate April, the first Dig Safe Month celebrated at Queen's Park, a celebration of the success enjoyed by the member from Sarnia–Lambton

and myself for Bill 8.

In the visitors' gallery we have Bob McKee, Avertex Utility Solutions; and from Enbridge Gas Distribution we have Vicki Mitchell, Tim Dykas and Maria Pilavakis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Welcome.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: It is my pleasure now to introduce Cardinal James, who's here, as well as once more to welcome Marino Gazzola, president, Catholic trustees. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, Your Eminence.

He's got a uniform like mine.

Further introductions.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to introduce Heather Higgins, who is a member of the Trillium Gift Of Life

Network, who will be joining us shortly.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: A point of order, Speaker: I'd like to correct my record. I was wrong in the way I introduced. My apologies. I'd like to reintroduce my guests: Cardinal Thomas Collins, Marino Gazzola and James Ryan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's always a point of order to correct your own record.

Now I will return to introductions.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce several guests who are with us in the gallery. They are Pascale

Daigneault, president of the Ontario Bar Association; Ronnie Gavsie, president and chief executive officer of the Trillium Gift of Life Network; and Heather Higgins, daughter of a former police officer who died in a car accident and donated his organs to help others; thank you. Heather.

They're here to support a partnership between the Ontario Bar Association and the Trillium Gift of Life Network, which is Make a Power of Attorney Month, in support of Be a Donor Month. Thank you so much for joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### SHAVE FOR THE BRAVE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to rise and recognize three schools in my riding that have organized an event called Shave for the Brave to benefit Young Adult Cancer Canada, YACC. Fred C. Cook Public School, W.H. Day Elementary School and Cookstown Central Public School are taking part in it this year.

The Shave for the Brave event invites participants to collect pledges and either cut up to 10 inches of hair or shave their heads bald to support Young Adult Cancer

Canada.

While many organizations collect donations for cancer, less than 1% are dedicated specifically to battling cancer in young adults ages 19 to 39, which is why I felt so strongly to speak today about this issue.

Three years ago, Fred C. Cook Public School introduced Shave for the Brave to the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury and has helped raise awareness of the Young Adult Cancer Canada organization and fundraise for them.

Having had the opportunity to attend the event at Fred C. Cook on March 21, I was impressed by the dedication these children have shown. With over 32 participants, both students and teachers, registered to shave their heads and the over \$6,000 in donations, this event has grown significantly.

This year, Shave for the Brave is going to be carried on in two other schools: W.H. Day and Cookstown. They will be hosting their own Shave for the Brave events in April. I wish them all the success they deserve, and I know they will raise thousands of dollars.

It's these exemplary children who remind me why I became an MPP: to help build the future that the people of this province deserve.

# INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm proud to rise as MPP for London West to recognize a group of 20 new Western university graduates, including six from my riding of London West, who were honoured yesterday at a special

indigenous graduation ceremony on the Western university campus. This was the second annual indigenous graduation ceremony hosted by the university, held to highlight the successes of indigenous students on campus and in the wider London community.

We know that indigenous students are much less likely than non-indigenous students to complete a university education. According to the 2006 census, only 10% of London's indigenous peoples had obtained a university degree, compared to 23% of the non-indigenous population. Recognition of indigenous students who have overcome systemic barriers to post-secondary education, along with culturally responsive programs and services that honour indigenous cultures and languages, is critical to supporting these students to achieve their highest potential.

I would like to acknowledge the important work that is being done at Western to foster indigenous presence and inclusion on campus and to increase engagement between the university and local indigenous communities. Most of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to these 20 new Western grads.

If Ontario's economy is to be successful, we need to leverage the talents and skills of all our citizens. I look forward to the contributions these graduates will make to our shared prosperity and quality of life in London and across the province.

#### WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, as I believe everyone in the chamber knows, today is World Autism Awareness Day. Every year around this date, organizations from across the globe hold events to fundraise and raise awareness for those in our communities dealing with autism.

Last Friday I was pleased—delighted, in fact—to attend one of these events, the 15th annual gala fundraiser in support of the Shining Through Centre. The Shining Through Centre is a not-for-profit organization in my community of Vaughan that provides high-quality therapy, education and research services for affected children and their families. This annual gala fundraiser is their largest fundraising initiative. This year, about 1,400 people from Vaughan and across the GTA were in attendance. I was pleased to be at this fun and touching event.

Our government has wholeheartedly supported this cause since 2003. In fact, we have invested nearly \$186 million per year for autism services.

I'd like to take a moment to specifically thank president Fred Santini and vice-president John Di Massimo of the Shining Through Centre, as well as everyone across the province doing their part to help affected families dealing with this situation across the province of Ontario.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today marks the very first time that Ontario observes Pope John Paul II Day. It was

recently enacted into provincial law, having been initially tabled seven years ago by my colleague the member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Today, the Ontario Legislature not only honours the man who served as spiritual leader to millions of Catholics in this province and around the world, but we also pay tribute to Pope John Paul II's legacy that reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace, the defence of equality and human rights. His legacy as the great son of Poland has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multifaith and multicultural traditions and experience.

As one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, the Pope visited Ontario twice during his pontificate of more than 25 years. Each time he visited here, he made an incredible impact on all of us as he reached beyond the Catholic church to defend the rights of all people, regardless of their faith and culture. He embraced everyone, especially the marginalized in society. He is therefore rightly called "Ontario's Pope," who will be formally canonized a saint by Pope Francis in Rome later this month.

Today we welcome to Queen's Park His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins of Toronto, who earlier celebrated the Eucharist here and who has given his constant support for Pope John Paul II Day from its inception. We also welcome other representatives of the Catholic Church, Catholic teachers and the proud members of our Polish-Canadian community. On behalf of our leader, I welcome all of you who have gathered here today to honour Pope John Paul II in this first commemoration.

1510

## WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: Today is World Autism Awareness Day. It was my privilege and honour to leave this place at noon and go down to Toronto city hall, where there was a ceremony and a flag-raising, and His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, along with other dignitaries, had an opportunity to speak about autism and autism services in this province and in this country.

I was there, and I listened intently to a young man—at least a younger man than me—who stood up. He had worked some 20 years at the Bank of Montreal, and he talked about being given a chance—a young man with autism—and for 20 years successfully held down a job; the bank had given him that opportunity.

Others spoke about autism, and the fact that one in 64 children born today in the province will find themselves with an autistic condition. They spoke about the need for all of us to do so much more. I know that we hear in the Legislature how much the government does or can do or should do, but I think all of us need to commit ourselves to doing more for people who have autism. We need to find jobs for them. We need to find education for them. We need to make sure they finish school. We need to find housing for them when they become adults. And we need to make sure, most of all, that children have the

services they need when they need them, and that they not be stuck on waiting lists for years.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today, it is an honour for me to stand here in this Legislature and officially declare April 2 as the very first Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario. It is particularly special that Cardinal Collins is here on this historic occasion. Thank you so much.

It was here in this very Legislature on Monday, March 17, that my bill to proclaim April 2 as Pope John Paul II Day passed third reading with all-party support, and for that, I am deeply grateful to all of you, my colleagues. I would also like to acknowledge the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora for his role in originally bringing this bill forward back in 2009.

One of the most charismatic and popular popes, as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II served as the spiritual guide to over a billion Catholics. As a political leader, he was the catalyst to end communist rule in his native Poland and eventually all of Europe. He won the hearts of millions around the world, people of all ages and all faiths; a pope who did not wait for people to come to him, but one who went out to meet the people.

The most travelled pope ever, he also became the first pope ever to come to Canada, making three trips in all. A remarkable man with many legacies: a pope who brought a generation of young people to the Catholic faith, a pope who sought personal redemption and reached out to the Jewish and Muslim faiths, and a pope who brought down communism. It is fitting that we now have a day in Ontario to commemorate the many legacies of this great man and soon-to-be saint.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It's a joy to watch everyone get along.

#### WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to stand today to also recognize World Autism Awareness Day, a day when autism organizations around the world raise funds and shed light on autism spectrum disorders. This day is a reminder of how important it is for the province of Ontario to develop a comprehensive strategy for people with developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorders. It has been an honour to serve as part of the Select Committee on Developmental Disabilities, which, I am happy to say, has put partisanship aside to focus on this important challenge. The select committee has heard from people all over the province about what we can do to improve the services and care for people with developmental disabilities, as well as what we can do to better support their families and caregivers. The committee is now working very hard on our recommendations, which will be released in our final report this May. It is our hope that we can ensure Ontario is a place where

each individual with an autism spectrum disorder has the means to achieve a high quality of life as a fully respected and fully integrated member of our society.

#### **CLUB COFFEE**

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Monsieur le Président, j'ai des développements extraordinaires dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke-Nord.

Speaker, I had the privilege, honour and heavy burden yesterday of welcoming the Premier of the province of Ontario to make an extraordinary \$5-million announcement at Club Coffee, an advanced manufacturing facility also supported by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

These folks have been a massive success story for the past 80 years. They are en route now to perhaps dominating the single-serve coffee pod K-cup market, and are going to be producing something in the order of almost a billion of these things per year, exporting globally. The investments, tied to their own investments, will together lead to 130 high-skilled jobs, single-serve packaging lines and high-quantity custom coffee roasting for across North America export. It's a remarkable facility.

Strangely, and oddly, when you think of coffee, I had this feeling that it would be an agricultural-level facility. But if you walk into it, it's actually part of Ontario's new generation of advanced manufacturing. To me, as a physician, frankly speaking, it looked like some kind of advanced genetic laboratory, with the assembly lines and robotics and electronic controls that were involved. It was extraordinarily refreshing for both the Premier and myself to see it right in Etobicoke North.

## CARING NURSE AWARDS

Mr. Bill Walker: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the hard-working and dedicated nurses in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and all across Ontario and Canada.

I would especially like to thank and extend my sincerest congratulations to a group of RNs and RPNs from Bruce and Grey who were recently awarded the 2014 Caring Nurse Award by Bayshore's Healthy Tomorrows Association for their outstanding front-line service to the local community and their patients.

They are Alma Geonanga, RN; Susan Miller, RN; Judy Greig, RN; Nancy Little, RN; Christina Sebesta—all from the Owen Sound Regional Hospital; Shelly Ashby, RN, from Lee Manor; Elizabeth McCutcheon, RN, from the Owen Sound Family Health Team; Carol Knox, RN, from family doctor A.L. McArthur; Debbie Zehr-Holst, RPN, Owen Sound Regional Hospital; Jennifer Wonch, RPN, Lee Manor; Holly Bowen, RPN, Meaford Long Term Care; Anne Stewart, RN, from Care Partners Visiting Nurses, Wiarton; Patty Furgal, RN, Lion's Head and Wiarton hospitals; Netta Mallard, RN, Wiarton Hospital; Lisa Slot, RPN, Wiarton Hospital; Valerie Breadner, RN, Centre Grey Hospital, Markdale;

Carolyn Leith, RN, Centre Grey Hospital, Markdale; Edith Huehn, RN, retired, Rockwood Terrace, Durham; Sarah Barr, RN, Walkerton birthing centre, South Grey Health Centre, Walkerton; Krysta Craig, RN, Southampton Hospital; and Helen Rice, RPN, Participation Lodge.

These caring people are the front-line caregivers, comforters, patient advocates and educators who made outstanding contributions to preserve, protect and improve the health, safety and well-being of patients and families in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Again, I'm honoured to recognize and celebrate their hard work and also to thank all dedicated nurses across Ontario and Canada for their excellent work and their caring spirit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Mr. Dunlop from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levae): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 1, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

1520

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

## DIG SAFE MONTH

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Yes, I am the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, but I'm making this statement on behalf of the Minister of Consumer Services.

But before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence to be able to introduce some folks who are here with us today and are involved with what we're about to talk about. I'm pleased to introduce members of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance: Peter Jurgeneit—I think I'm saying that right—a board member for the ORCGA; Lloyd Chiotti, Ontario One Call—you can stand up if you like, folks; Leslie Elliott, Bell Canada; Trevor Tuck, Enbridge Gas Distribution; James Scho-

field, Enbridge Gas Distribution; and Mike McGivery, Enbridge Gas Distribution.

Mr. Speaker, I'd beg your indulgence before I start the statement, just to reach across the aisle in a spirit of continuity and unity. This was an issue supported by all sides of the House, and I want to acknowledge my colleagues, who will likely respond: the member for Sarnia–Lambton was a leader on this; and I think the member for Hamilton East was as well, if I recall. This was an issue important to him; I don't know if he's responding. But I want to thank them for their work here as well.

Now for the statement. It's a great privilege for me to rise in the House today to recognize April's designation as Dig Safe Month in Ontario. Dig Safe Month is dedicated to increasing awareness of collective efforts by government, corporations and municipalities to improve safety and reduce damages to underground infrastructure through safe digging practices.

I hope that many members are wearing pins today to commemorate Dig Safe Month. I want to use this occasion to remind the House that on Monday, March 31, new regulations were brought into force that will enable Ontario One Call to effectively administer the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act. You'll recall that this initiative was originally brought forward by the member for Sarnia–Lambton and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, whom I've just acknowledged.

Ontario One Call—or ON1Call, as it's commonly referred to; I guess "ON1Call" is what they say—is a statutory, not-for-profit corporation that is responsible for administering the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act.

ON1Call is the single point of contact for people requesting the location of underground infrastructure before they start to dig. The new regulation sets out terms and conditions of membership and provides the corporation with much-needed tools to promote and encourage compliance. As a result, Ontario will have the first comprehensive and mandatory one-call-to-dig system in Canada. Fittingly, it coincides with the start of spring digging season.

Dig Safe Month serves as a reminder to excavators that they need to call Ontario One Call before digging begins to prevent injuries, property damage and service outages. All owners and operators of underground infrastructure, including municipalities, are required to be members of Ontario One Call and to respond to requests to locate underground infrastructure.

Ontario One Call's mandate is to:

—operate a call system to receive excavator requests for the location of underground infrastructure within Ontario:

—identify for excavators whether underground infrastructure is located in the vicinity of a proposed excavation or dig site;

-notify members of proposed excavations or digs that may affect their underground infrastructure; and

—raise public awareness of Ontario One Call and the need for safe digging.

By working together, we can improve safety and reduce damage to vital underground infrastructure through safe digging practices across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to respond today on behalf of the PC caucus and as a co-sponsor of this bill. I'd like to first of all thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for the kind words that he gave across the aisle. It was a pleasure to work with Minister Tracy MacCharles, the Minister of Consumer Services, and her ministry in bringing this bill to fruition.

I'd like to thank all members of the House, from all three parties, who did work together. It's symbolic, I think, that this House can work together a number of times on a number of different issues that are important to Ontario, and this was one that was certainly that.

It's an honour to rise in the House today to recognize April as Dig Safe Month and to recognize that in just few weeks, the Ontario One Call system will be fully operational in the province of Ontario. In June 2012, Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, the private member's bill that I introduced with my colleague the MPP from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mr. Paul Miller, was passed into law by the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

The purpose of this bill was to create one central location that anyone in Ontario could contact for free to obtain complete and accurate information about the correct location of infrastructure. Whether it's a homeowner planting a tree or a road-building crew restoring a street, homeowners and workers alike can take comfort that infrastructure assets in the ground will be clearly marked before they begin a project. This means fewer accidental strikes to infrastructure, fewer costly delays, fewer interruptions of service and, most importantly, increased safety and security for those people of Ontario who are in the vicinity of those locations.

Ontario is the first province in Canada to pass this sort of legislation. The Ontario One Call system has set the standard, set the bar, for service and safety and has become a model for all other jurisdictions in Canada to follow. In February, it was my pleasure to appear before the Senate of Canada's Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources to discuss the One Call organization, the implementation of the Ontario One Call initiative and how it could be replicated across the country to make infrastructure construction safer. I believe that the work that we have done here in this House, in Ontario, with Ontario One Call has set that standard for underground and public safety in Canada. That is something we should take tremendous pride in in this House.

Of course, MPP Miller and I wouldn't have had the success we had with Bill 8 if it wasn't for the support that we received from the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance and their member organizations, many of which are represented here today. I'd like to recognize some of the groups we have here today—only a number of them,

but they were very important and key to this legislation: Union Gas, Ontario One Call, Bell Canada and Avertex Utility Solutions, just to name a few. This core group has shown tremendous leadership and an unwavering focus on advancing safety standards in Ontario.

I'd like to also acknowledge my former legislative assistant Mr. David Donovan, who's here today. David has now joined another organization, Enbridge, but he had a lot to do with drafting this bill and did the lion's share of the work. I just got to stand in the House and read it. Anyway—there was lot more to it than that.

Over the last three years, I've had the honour of working very closely with the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance and its members to promote the importance of being fully aware of the location of utilities or other infrastructure that may be located in areas of dig sites. Yesterday at Nathan Phillips Square, we officially kicked off Dig Safe Month in Toronto and across the province. I look forward to many more events with the ORCGA and continuing to promote public safety across the province.

Like I said to the Senate colleagues when I was there in February and March, I'm not saying Bill 8 is perfect, but take it as a template. Make it better. Take this across the country. Do what you can to make this a trans-Canada bill that would take into account all the infrastructure and all the excavations and construction. It's about the environment. It's about safety and health for individuals. We want every man and woman to go home safe at the end of the day.

As I wind up, remember: Always call before you dig.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to come before the

House today to offer a response to the minister regarding Dig Safe Month. Yesterday, I was honoured to attend the kickoff to Dig Safe Month at Nathan Phillips Square, at Toronto city hall, where I was joined by my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton; Toronto city councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong; Glenn Beaumont, president of Enbridge Gas Distribution; and Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance acting president and CEO Jim Douglas.

Before I continue, I would also like to thank Minister MacCharles for her co-operation throughout this process.

Dig Safe is dedicated to improving safety and reducing damage to underground facilities by raising awareness of the safe digging practices through local events across the province. In 2011, with my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton, I was proud to introduce Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario. The purpose of Bill 8 was to establish Ontario One Call Limited as a not-for-profit single point of contact for all utility location services in Ontario. It was the result of far-reaching consultation with industry and a lot of hard work by the Ontario alliance members, the staff of my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton, and also my staff.

1530

In June 2012 in this Legislature we passed Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, allowing Ontarians to simply call one number

for all their underground utility locates. After complete implementation of related regulations in June 2014, Ontario will become the leading Canadian province for safe digging practices.

Prior to the introduction of Bill 8, failing to locate all underground and overhead utilities resulted in unnecessary repair and replacement costs passed on to utility customers and municipal taxpayers, totalling nearly \$39

million each year.

In 2010 alone, there were over 3,200 natural gas line breaks in Ontario. In 2008-09, two accidental strikes resulted in fatalities. These deaths could have easily been prevented if Ontarians had accurate, up-to-date information on the infrastructure that exists on their property. Loss of life is the worst case, but in addition there is loss of revenue, productivity and efficiency for businesses of all sizes.

While I am happy to stand here today and proclaim that Ontarians have access to the information which will keep them safe, it has been a long way to get here. We are quickly approaching the two-year anniversary of the passing of Bill 8 and yet it's only today that we are seeing the final regs, well past any original deadlines that were established. In those two years, as a co-sponsor of Bill 8, I was only informed officially once on the progress. The minister did pass me notes on occasion. This process took far, far too long; however, given those delays, I am happy that we are finally here today to celebrate Dig Safe Month.

As a former steelworker, I can appreciate the importance of a safe work environment. I was involved in heavy industry for over 30 years and I've seen a lot of accidents which could have been prevented. In those days, it was always a knee-jerk reaction, but with Bill 8 we have enacted a piece of legislation which will prevent accidents and save lives.

Speaker, ensuring the safety of those who work or live in the vicinity of underground facilities and protecting vital services is everyone's responsibility. I believe that all of us in the Legislature expect that when our loved one goes to work each day, they will come home safely at the end of it.

We are at the beginning of summer job time for students, and many of them will go to workplaces that do have maximum safety measures taken to protect them. Unfortunately, some will suffer injury and may not be able to earn the money they use to go back to school in September. We try to implement measures to provide the best protection possible for all workers but particularly our youth.

We still have a long way to go in many industries, but at least we'll know that once the regulations are finally implemented, all workers, residents and businesses affected by underground infrastructure will have a much better chance of making it home without harm.

The bill speaks to the beliefs of every member in this House. Bill 8 and its regulations will not only make it easier for all Ontarians to ensure that they can safely go forward with a landscaping project or dig a foundation for a new structure, but they'll be able to do it safely.

Dig Safe Month affords the opportunity for all of us to share this information with our constituents and be sure that they are aware of these new safety opportunities available to them. I commend all the underground infrastructure companies who have worked so hard for so long on this project. It was the right cause, supported by all parties in this Legislature.

I look forward to continuing work that will have Ontario One Call a common term for all Ontarians. I would like to give you a reminder, Speaker. I would like to remind the public and all members that, except in emergency situations, requests for locates should be made at least one week in advance. Locate requests can completed online at www.onlcall.com or by calling 1-800-400-2255.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

#### **PETITIONS**

## PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's a very interesting afternoon here, but it's time to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65" and over "to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise" the money to pay for therapy and treatment;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and present it to Urooj.

#### **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE**

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) is outdated, ineffective and the provincial government needs to conduct a review of the entire system;

"Whereas many families are either paying too much in child support or receiving too little, due to the ineffect-

iveness of the system;

"Whereas families are forced to become their own caseworkers to investigate information that is required by the Family Responsibility Office before they can enforce action;

"Whereas many of the federal and provincial databases do not link up, causing misinformation which affects the money paid or owed in child support for many families:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the provincial government to strike an allparty-support select committee to conduct a review of the practices of the Family Responsibility Office to improve and streamline the collection of child support in the

province of Ontario."

I sign this and give it to Divya to be delivered to the

table.

#### **USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition ici adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have

fully embraced digital technologies;

Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite

technologies:

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of

technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months:

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties:

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree with this, Speaker, sign it and affix my signature, and send it to you via page Calvin.

### **CYSTIC FIBROSIS**

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels. For a CF patient with the specific G551D mutation, access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the over-

whelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legisla-

tive Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families as it is to those in several countries, including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom."

I am pleased to affix my signature in support and send

it to the table with page Jane.

## ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Prue: I have a petition. It has been read into the Legislature before, so I want to read the "be it resolved." It's in French.

« Que le ministre de l'Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7° à la 12° année d'études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n'auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d'une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je suis d'accord, et je vais la signer et la donner à Mustfah

1540

## **USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition ici adressée à l'assemblée législative, which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have

fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite

technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of tech-

nology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties:

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree with this, Speaker, and send it to you via page Nusaybah.

#### AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding postsecondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it to page

Jonah.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I like the "minister" part.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands;

"Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike;

"Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

"Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-

bly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors."

I totally agree with this petition and will give it to

page Kathryn.

#### USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister—member from Etobicoke North. I've got "minister" on the brain today.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I can aspire only.

I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas there is more to full exploitation of technol-

ogy than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties."

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree, Speaker, affix my signature and send it to you via page Jane.

#### **CHARITABLE GAMING**

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm sitting beside the member—or, the minister from Kitchener—Waterloo.

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I'm asking the Minister of Finance to introduce this in the budget coming up on May 1.

## **ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS**

M. Taras Natyshak: Je suis content d'introduire une pétition pour l'école secondaire francophone de quartier,

de 7^e et 12^e année, des citoyens de Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville. Je vais aussi lire seulement la dernière partie, comme mon collègue de Beaches-East York, qui dit:

« Que le ministre de l'Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7º à la 12º année d'études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n'auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d'une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition. Je vais affixer ma signature et vous la présenter par page Divya.

Le Président suppléant (M. Paul Miller): Merci. 1550

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

# COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2014

## LOI DE 2014 DE CONFORMITÉ AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES INTERNATIONALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité en ce qui concerne une décision de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last time we dealt with this, Mr. Tabuns had the floor. We'll now move on. Further debate, please.

Mr. Michael Prue: I should state at the outset that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Essex. I think that may be the limit of NDP speakers on this particular bill. We both wanted to be on record, so we're going to take this opportunity, but I also understand that the bill may collapse sometime today, due to a lack of speakers.

Mr. Speaker, it was important for me to be on the record because I feel very passionately and strongly about the position in which Ontario has now found itself. Ontario has found itself subject to a WTO—World Trade Organization—ruling against Ontario's domestic content rules.

This could have and should have been foreseen. I know it's often very difficult to anticipate legal chal-

lenges, particularly legal challenges that take place in other parts of the world. But Ontario should have been well aware, in the path that Ontario has chosen to go with electricity, that we might find ourselves up against the World Trade Organization, because we decided as a province, I think mistakenly, a number of years ago—and it continues—to privatize our electricity system.

The World Trade Organization deemed that Ontario's position was inconsistent with the general agreement and therefore ruled against us. So Ontario now has to face the task of redoing the legislation, which we're doing here, but also has to look—in my view, and I hope the government would agree—at whether the structure we have set up with a whole series of private companies that produce and distribute our electricity in Ontario is in the best interests of the province and the people who live here. Quite clearly, if it is going to mean that jobs are lost in Ontario, it's not. If it's going to mean that jobs might be gained in Ontario if we get into a big export market, if that's where we go, then maybe, as in all bad things, some good can come of it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight and show the difference between what is happening here in Ontario with the World Trade Organization and what is happening in the province of Quebec. Quebec has an electrical system not dissimilar in the past to what Ontario had, but they have kept theirs largely in-house. In the province of Quebec, they produce the electricity, they distribute the electricity, they own the electricity, and they don't get into the same problems that we do. Quebec is not the subject of a World Trade Organization challenge. They were not challenged by anyone: not by Japan, not by Europe. No one brought a case against them, largely because Quebec was deemed to be close to the direct government procurement model.

I would suggest that it is in Ontario's best interest to look at that direct procurement model, if not for electricity, then for a great many other things, if we are going to safeguard the livelihood and the jobs of the people of Ontario. Quebec has done that. Ontario instead went down a system which we in this place often refer to as FIT. Now, FIT has a great many problems to it altogether, but this is the one that has manifested itself most significantly, at least in terms of this bill.

I would think it is time for us to rethink the privatization, not only of our electrical system but of a great many systems, as this government goes down-and I have heard the Minister of Transportation wax eloquently a few times on P3s, on that kind of model, saying that although they didn't work in the past, he is now confident that they can work in the future, after a little bit of tinkering. I would caution against that kind of thought, because in the end, if we find ourselves subject to some kind of ruling and if we are forced to comply, the P3s that the government often thinks may save moneyactually, they don't ever save money, but the government pretends they sometimes will save money—might end up being far more costly than the actual P3 itself in terms of jobs and long-term prospects for the people of Ontario. So I'm asking that.

I think what we need to do now, as well as rethink the privatization, is rethink how, in the past, we were producing jobs on local projects, to see whether any of those can be saved. It's important that the people who have those jobs, some of them very good-paying jobs, keep them in order for the Ontario economy to prosper but, more so, to make sure that the individuals and their families prosper.

We need to look at and rethink and inform local communities about the jobs that may be gained in the future, or perhaps those that would be lost, so that planning can take place.

If we go down the other route, if we learn from this lesson and become much more export-oriented, and if we are able—I'm sure we are able to compete on export markets, to go into them in a big way. We have the expertise here. We have people who know how to build. We have people who know how to design. Certainly, we have the wherewithal in our industrial and commercial enterprises to make an excellent product.

Having said that, I think we need to expand those markets. We need to expand public electricity, because only public electricity seems to work in this province or in this country. I look at the two borders on either side of us: Manitoba and Quebec. They are not going through the paroxysms that we are here with our electricity production and with all of the costs and cost overruns and, need I say, the inflated CEO salaries from those public and private-public partnerships that have been set up.

We need to expand community co-operatives, because this is the reality of where I think we should be going. If you can expand the co-ops, if you can involve the First Nations, if you can get the local distribution companies down pat, many of the complaints that people have, particularly about solar and wind power, will dissolve. If you can show that there is a community benefit by building it, then the communities will accept the windmills and the solar farms on the adjacent lands. If you can't, they won't.

I think we have to rethink our energy policy. That starts at home. That starts as a result of this bill, and I would suggest that we recognize that the bill must proceed. I think all members of the House recognize that the bill must proceed because of the situation in which we have found ourselves.

Having said that, we need to learn the lessons of the WTO ruling, and we need to make sure that we do not get caught in this way again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I leave the remaining time for my colleague from Essex.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex. They were distracting me. Sorry.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Thank you so much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): At least I didn't call you "Minister."

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, whatever. I wouldn't mind that either.

Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate and a pleasure to follow my colleague—our finance critic for the Ontario NDP—the member for Beaches—East York on this particular provision and bill that has come before the House that really brings into question now the overall benefit of the Green Energy Act in its entirety.

In Windsor and Essex county, we have seen quite an expansion of industrial wind turbines and industrial solar farms, not so much on the microFIT side but more on the feed-in tariff side, on the large industrial side. Knowing that these issues were contentious and complex in their initiatives, at least we knew that there were some provisions built into the Green Energy Act that would require provisions for domestic content.

As New Democrats, it is a little bit fundamental, I guess, to our overall principles in terms of supporting domestic manufacturing—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, it's a little bit fundamental, or a lot fundamental. It's fundamental. It's a principle. It's a core principle.

Interjections.

1600

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know. It's interesting. Yes, it is fundamental. Thank you to my colleagues who have corrected me. It is fundamental in terms of protecting domestic production and it's fundamental in the sense that we have a historical record of advocating for fair trade policies and advocating for domestic procurement and advocating for enhanced manufacturing on our own home turf, in our own jurisdiction. That means that we don't simply ship raw resources out; we actually add value to them and look for value-added manufacturing in resource-based industries.

One, of course, that we know very well in this province is the automotive industry. Prior to the initial Free Trade Agreement, the FTA, with Canada and the United States, and the subsequent NAFTA agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement, there existed a provision called the Auto Pact, which required, very simply, that if you were to sell your product here, then you had to make your product here. I wonder if any members in the House can reflect back on the enormity of that industry in this province prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement. I can tell you, having grown up in Windsor and Essex county, that we had Ford, Chrysler and GM running nearly-I believe, in total, at full production, we had about 10 different plants employing tens of thousands of workers in Windsor and Essex county, not to mention the tier 2 suppliers in the tool and die and mould sector. We were bustling. Of course, we had a preferential dollar at that time, but what we knew was that if units, specifically in the automotive sector, were to be sold in Canada, they had to have some content built in Canada. That's what, I guess, essentially protected us from the effects of globalization and free trade agreements.

Now fast-forward to 2014, where the World Trade Organization, the dispute settlement body of the WTO, under provisions under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—an unelected, unaccountable body that exists somewhere in the ether-has determined that, as a subnational jurisdiction, we cannot put these clauses in or ensure that we have domestic content built into our energy sector. I would say and I would submit and argue that that is dangerous, specifically in energy, because if we are to say that we have no control in terms of the content or the quality—of course we would have quality, but ultimately, it's a free market. We can't be assured that those important power-generating products will have the our best interests at heart. By that, I mean that I want a company in Ontario, in Canada, to produce those important assets that make up our energy production. I want them to have some skin in the game. I also want them to have to rely on the continuity and quality of their product for their own manufacturing. You see the case that I'm making here. I would like them to have some skin in the game. Of course, when they are producing and manufacturing and adding value, that adds to the economy of our province.

It was, again, one of the very few provisions of the Green Energy Act that I saw any tangible benefit to. Now this bill will apparently wipe out that benefit, and I have a question to the government. I understand that the debate will collapse today because no one is ready to speak on it or they aren't ready to answer questions, which is unfortunate; maybe I missed something. But I want to know now: What are the remaining benefits of the Green Energy Act if we are no longer able to assure that we have some control in terms of the manufacturing process, in terms of the quality, in terms of what gets built in our province?

My colleague the member from Beaches-East York pinpointed what the government's focus will be on from here on in. It will be simply on outsourced, privatized components to make up the bulk of our energy system. It's a little bit frightening, to say the least, to know that now we are at the whim of the WTO. We see other jurisdictions, like Quebec, who have taken control and understood that it was something worth fighting for, to ensure that you have those provisions, mainly because, on the procurement side and distribution side, they are heavily publicly owned and operated. I would love to see the government take on that type of responsibility.

I don't know if we have gone too far away from the principles that made up our historic Ontario power system here, which were to ensure that it was publicly owned, publicly managed, distributed at a fair price and used as a strategic asset. I think we have gone so far away from that that I shudder to think that this government has the ability to regain any control over it. It is directly one of the reasons that we see skyrocketing hydro rates. I would also say that we'll probably see more, given the fact that now we won't be able to control or to identify beneficial manufacturers that are in this province that could add to the value of the overall Green Energy Act and FIT contracts that are given out.

The entire argument speaks to the nature of, "Buy local, buy Ontario, support local business," and anyone who speaks in favour of this I guess no longer has the legitimacy to say that they support "Buy local" in any other respect, whether it be in manufacturing or whether it be in agriculture, because if you're saying that we relinquish our ability and control to support domestic manufacturing, then you also say, you know, why should we support domestic agriculture? The industries are similar in that respect, Speaker. Of course, we understand foreign markets, and we understand that it's important to access foreign markets, but on a fair basis, one that identifies that we certainly can't bring our standards down to a level that undermines the ability for our domestic manufacturers to compete and undermines a healthy economy.

This is an argument that I certainly have made in many other debates, whether it be around green energy or agriculture or any other aspect of provincial procurement. It's one that, unfortunately, given the WTO and the fact of their ruling against Ontario, makes us less able to ever be able to infuse any domestic procurement contracts ever again. I wonder if this is a slippery slope that the government should have identified prior to the initiation of the Green Energy Act, as my colleague from Beaches—East York said. They could have foreseen this. They should have foreseen that it was to be challenged, again, through the mechanisms of privatization of our green energy.

Speaker, I'm pleased to have had the ability to add my comments to this debate. I'm pleased that New Democrats have expressed deep concern with the way that this government has managed our energy file in general. I hope that Ontarians are listening and paying attention to exactly what has happened with the Green Energy Act and how these are systemic failures that have been identified here that ultimately will lead to a failure in the overall system.

I appreciate your time, Speaker, and thanks for recognizing me from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're more than welcome.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate the comments from the member from Essex. At the outset, this does deal with a single clause of a relatively abstract or abstruse kind of bill here with reference to the WTO agreement. We're removing some restrictions on domestic content to fulfill our World Trade Organization rules.

But perhaps in reply to one of your other, earlier questions that you brought up in your remarks concerning benefits of the Green Energy Act, I have to say that as a physician who was very proud to witness our government's closure of coal-fired generation, therefore removing untold particles and particulate matter from the air that we breathe, that is an extraordinary, progressive and full-of-foresight initiative.

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I can give you a very quick example. My own daughter, who's 14 years old, travelled recently to China

with her school. In one of the prep meetings for that, all the kids, the 20 or so girls who were going to this, were instructed to buy N75 masks—which is, by the way, SARS-level protection—in order to basically walk around the streets of Beijing, China. By the way, that's a bit of a shock to a doctor, because we were instructed as doctors only to wear those types of masks if, for example, we suspect somebody has some pretty high-powered virus or drug-resistant tuberculosis or something in front of us. This is part and parcel of the daily life of very large segments of the population.

I would simply say that when we're looking at this particular abstruse clause with regard to the WT Organization, or whether we're looking at the larger framework of, for example, as you said, the Green Energy Act and its cascading and legacy-level benefits in the future,

we're on very solid ground.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased, in the last dying moments of this small bill, to have a couple of minutes to comment on the member from Beaches–East York as well as Essex.

I would say this: I have to put a plug in here for my son. My son is the parliamentary secretary federally to the Minister of International Trade, Minister Ed Fast. I did have occasion to talk to him about this, because this is an infringement of trade law internationally. As such, the province, you would think—now, I don't blame the Minister of Energy specifically. Minister Chiarelli is a very respectable member and all that thing, but he wouldn't know much about this. But when they screwed up in the Green Energy Act, Bill 150, they forgot to do what Quebec did and put in some assurance that there would be job creation in Ontario as a result of this Green Energy Act. As it turned out, most of the solar panels and all this stuff were coming from somewhere else—China and other places. They then, retrospectively, tried to fix the problem by putting in a glowing error into the bill itself of permitting a certain amount of domestic content. Well, then they started to fund those people through some of these picking-winners-and-losers types of grants they have under McGuinty-Wynne.

I'm not surprised that the international court has ruled against them, because like most of the things this government is doing, they're under suspicion. It comes down, fundamentally, to not being able to manage projects. I see it all the time. It's getting worse by the day. Even in the papers today, there's questioning about spending another \$5.7 billion that they don't have.

With all due respect, Speaker, this bill here—I believe enough time has been spent. Admit you've broken the law, come out with your hands up, and let's get on with it, because this government certainly needs to be corrected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's an honour once again to have a couple of minutes to put something on the record

regarding An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision.

It's a very small bill, but it's not abstract and it's a big issue, because when the Green Energy Act was promoted and created, it was to kick-start the production of green energy technology in the province. A noble goal: 60,000 jobs. But what they forgot, and what is truly galling is—and this government should have the expertise. I come from a dairy background, and we spend a lot of time looking at World Trade Organization rules. There's a lot of expertise in this country regarding the World Trade Organization. Yet this government failed to check to see if this would comply. That's the problem, and that's a big problem.

That's the difference between what Quebec did and what Ontario did. Ontario went gung-ho: "Just forget about all the rules. We've got this great idea: We're going to put turbines all over. And when we put turbines all over, we can build the factories." Somebody forgot to check the WTO. That's what this bill is about. That is truly scary, that this government can just kind of—because the expertise is there. We're under trade threat all the time.

This is the member from Etobicoke North: "This is an abstract little bill." No, it's not. This is what the Green Energy Act hinged on: all those jobs. Well, this bill destroys all the jobs, because they forgot to design it so it would pass the WTO. And it's possible, because Quebec did it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It has been a fascinating discussion. The member for Durham talks about the federal government, which removed all taxes on foreign-made parts that come into Canada. I hope he votes Liberal federally, because the argument you just made was against the federal Conservative Party's position on removing tax. The other thing that's interesting is, they didn't support the reform which took \$8.5 billion of reduced costs out of Canadian manufacturers. So the official opposition is saying, "Don't tax foreign-made parts," and here in this House, they wanted to keep taxes higher for Canadian-made manufacturing.

On the issue of legality, I've been involved in a number of trade fights and issues, including one, very famously, where we walked the fine edge. Quite frankly, you have to, sometimes, as we did on clean energy. People may remember the battle with the World Trade Organization that many municipalities in this province, Manitoba and Quebec had over the apparel industry on duty remissions, where there was a debate about what the legal standing was. We took the chance to protect our apparel industry, and we won at the WTO.

We make a lot of buses in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, but they're 40% made here and they're hauled off to branch plants in the northern US because the Buy America policy—actually, I still have questions about its legality. The Americans played hardball, and they won—60% of buses that are Canadian-made.

The member for Nepean–Carleton always sort of suggests something that I find very ridiculous. I'm really confused by the Conservatives' policy these days, because she said that this would be declaring a trade war. We weren't declaring a trade war with duty remissions or lumber or steel or buses.

Is the Conservative Party's position "trade surrender"? You're never going to take a stand and never go before the WTO and never take a chance? Well, we're prepared to take those chances to do exactly what the member for Essex said: protect Ontario jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex, or Beaches–East York, has two minutes. The member from Beaches–East York.

Interjection: Seniority rules, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** As my colleague said, seniority rules. I think we flipped a coin and I lost.

I thank the members from Etobicoke North, Durham and Timiskaming, and the Minister of Transportation for their comments.

No one would deny that going into green energy is probably more healthy for the people of Ontario in terms of what they're breathing. No one would deny that getting out of dirty coal is a good thing. We would only suggest that when the Liberal Party first talked about getting out of coal, they said they were going to do it in a couple of years, and this has literally taken 10 years, not the initial two or three that were promised.

The member from Durham: Ît's always a pleasure to listen, especially to the little tidbits that he gets from his son, and some gleaning of thought of what's going on in the process in Ottawa.

The member from Timiskaming: Thank you very much for your very fiery rendition on all of this. I have to agree with him that we should know what to expect, in many cases, because of the—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, yes. I mean, we know, in so many cases, that we are going to be taken to task as a province, as a country, whenever there are trade deals at risk, and we know that many of those have gone badly for us.

That brings me back to the Minister of Transportation. Do the Americans play hardball and win? Yes. So do the Japanese, and so do the Europeans, and so does everyone else. Everybody plays hardball to win. When you know that you're up against that at the outset, you should shield yourself from some of that when you have an idea that it may be coming down the pipe, or conceivably might.

All I'm suggesting, and all my colleague from Essex was suggesting, is, if Quebec knew how to shield themselves, we should have known how to do it too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Seeing none, Mr. Chiarelli has moved second reading of Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjections.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** No; I'm sorry. The government would like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has referred it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. It is so ordered.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Murray has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1621.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough Sud-Ouest	-
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	Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
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Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Willister of Natural Resources / Willistre des Richesses naturenes
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		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don valley west / Don valley-Ouest	l'Alimentation
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Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette

Michael Prue

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla John Fraser, Michael Harris

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Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek Phil McNeely, Norm Miller John O'Toole, Jagmeet Singh

Soo Wong

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Catherine Fife, John Fraser

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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor

Soo Wong

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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 3 April 2014

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 3 avril 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Dave Levac

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 April 2014

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING STUDENTS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 PROTÉGEANT LES ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 1, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 with respect to discipline and other related matters / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la discipline et d'autres questions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item was last debated, Mr. Leone had the floor and had 20 minutes and 58 seconds remaining. The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to resume debate on this matter. The last time I spoke to this bill, which was the beginning of my one-hour lead, was October I of last year, I believe, so it's been quite some time. I'm pretty sure everyone remembers what I said on October 1, since it was a riveting speech. I remember it was that date because it was about 12 hours or so after I became the critic for education; the very next day, I had to start my one-hour lead on this particular piece of legislation. This piece of legislation, as I noted then, is based upon a very thought-provoking report by the Honourable Justice Patrick LeSage. The LeSage report outlined some of the recommendations that were and should be implemented in reforming the Ontario College of Teachers.

I would say that, without a shadow of a doubt, we are very interested in pursuing what the short title of this legislation is, which is the Protecting Students Act. I can say with absolute certainty that, on this side of the House, that's exactly what we want to do: We want to protect our students. We are moms and dads, aunts and uncles, some of us are grandparents, who deeply care about children. I can state that our Leader of the Opposition has recently added an addition to his family. So certainly children are very important to our daily operation as parents as well as legislators.

At that time, way back in October when this bill was first debated, I started to talk about some of the things that Justice LeSage had stated. I'm not going to repeat too much of what I said back then, because hopefully everyone remembers, but this piece of legislation is an important and timely update to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, an act that was established in 1996, I believe, under our previous government, and an act that we certainly want to see improved.

Justice LeSage painstakingly took and investigated the review of the Ontario College of Teachers. His report, so people remember, is the Review of the Ontario College of Teachers Intake, Investigation and Discipline Procedures and Outcomes, and the Dispute Resolution Program. It was reported on May 31, 2012. There have been a lot of changes that have happened to the Ontario College of Teachers throughout this process, some of which talked about the modifications of who sits on the board of directors, what representation should come from outside the teaching profession versus inside the teaching profession, and changes have been made. I think what Justice LeSage is saying in this report, and what the legislation seeks to do, is to make those reforms necessary to rebalance what's occurring in our College of Teachers. I'm going to go over a few of the provisions that this bill actually does include, and talk about what we appreciate and what we think needs some serious revision.

First of all, one of the key provisions of this legislation is to publish all decisions of the college's discipline committee. The idea behind this proposal is to suggest that if there is an issue with, perhaps, a student raising something with a teacher, the complaint is actually published so people can view it. If there are disciplinary activities that have occurred, people have a right to know. If a teacher teaches in one school board and they try to get a job in another school board, there is a process, there is a system, and there is a mechanism for understanding some of the disciplinary issues or complaints that may have arisen through that teacher's tenure. We think that's an important element that provides a degree of transparency in the system.

The bill also outlines clear rules for the use of an alternative dispute resolution process in confirming that no cases involving sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or child pornography would be eligible for alternative dispute resolution. These are actually very serious offences that may take place, and I think what we would suggest is that the focus must be on reinforcing and reassuring victims of these activities and these acts of sexual misconduct that we are there for them. We are going through

a process—and it's outlining a process in the legislation. Certainly, Justice LeSage talked about some of those items in his report: How you deal with those very serious matters that arise that may have an effect on a person's ability to go to school.

We've talked to some victims of sexual crimes in the past. Very recently, I was in an email exchange with a gentleman who has been a past victim of a sexual crime, and what he wanted me to assure members of the public and people who have been victims of these crimes is that we would do the most to protect those people. They have undergone life-altering experiences in a very negative context. Their psychological and mental health and their mental well-being has changed as a result of these sexual activities, and we have to reassure those people that we are behind these victims. I think what we're saying, when we're deliberating over this bill, is that we have to take some concern and some time to really reinforce this idea that we are there to protect the victims.

This gentleman is part of a network of 12,000 men who have been sexually abused in some way, shape or form. They're heart-wrenching stories, certainly stories that we don't want any of our children to face as they grow up. It's sometimes very troubling for parents to comprehend that these acts actually happen to kids, and we have to make sure that we're doing our utmost to reinforce their protection. Certainly, Justice LeSage was talking about that.

#### 0910

Another major provision that this bill talks about is clarifying when school boards must inform the Ontario College of Teachers of cases where the board has restricted the duties of a teacher or dismissed them for misconduct. There have to be processes outlined. I think everyone would agree that some rules and procedures are put in place so that when allegations of activities have been made against a teacher, they are properly identified. Sometimes, there is an investigative process. Sometimes, there is some thought that needs to be put into the severity of the act. I think there is a need for clear rules and responsibilities for school boards to notify the Ontario College of Teachers with respect to that.

Allowing the Ontario College of Teachers to take swift action and share information with the school board if it is determined that the subject of the complaint may pose an immediate risk to the student: Again, what we would say is that we have to make sure the student is in a safe, healthy, nurturing environment to learn. It's not possible for students to be in a safe, healthy, nurturing environment to learn if they are under threat, and particularly if the teacher leading the discussion in the classroom may be the instigator or may be the person that is providing that anxiety to that student, based on a potential act.

We obviously want to make it as safe as possible for students to voice concerns, particularly when very serious offences have taken place. We see often in the media that victims of child sexual abuse have this reluctance to tell somebody that an act has taken place. Sometimes, we see that five or 10 years later, when the child has had the strength to talk about those problems, this is when these are brought to light.

We have to make sure that what we're doing is protecting that student, to ensure they're in an environment that is optimal for learning, and that they're comfortable in telling people that something may have transpired that requires specific attention by the education system, the school board, the school and so on. There have to be some protections put in place for those students to feel that they are in a safe and nurturing environment.

We have to understand that sometimes, when there are very serious allegations at play, we actually do need to come in and we do need to step in. It might be a misunderstanding of sorts. There could be some elements such that an investigation may lead to a particular outcome that is positive or negative. But we have to make sure that, at the very outset, we're protecting students.

My wife, as I've mentioned before, is a child psychologist. The repercussions of having these students undergoing some serious and life-altering events have a negative effect on kids' mental health. We know that mental health has certainly been a push that we've been moving forward. I think all parties agree that we need to do more, particularly with children, to help to create an environment where the awareness of mental health issues is elevated. I think we have to have a process in recognizing that there are elements where we will have to act as swiftly as possible.

Imposing timelines to resolve cases at the investigation stage, when appropriate: One of the things that I had not known is that sometimes these cases would be neverending in terms of their time of closure. They could be open for long periods of time, and nothing is being done with those cases. Of course, when you are the victim of a negative experience in the classroom, you want to make sure that the issue is being dealt with as quickly as possible, and that there is some deadline by which a report has to be rendered, a decision has to be rendered, on a particular case.

We appreciate that this legislation provides that timeline. Certainly, whenever you have timelines, you're going to debate whether the timeline is too long or too short, but at least we have an idea of when these items can be and should be discussed in an appropriate manner.

Another provision is to require that a panel hearing a matter relating to a principal or vice-principal must include a principal or vice-principal as well. Of course, the relationship with principals and vice-principals and our Ontario College of Teachers obviously has to be spelled out. There are issues where there are panels that investigate whether a principal or vice-principal is involved, and having an understanding from an administrator of a school's perspective on a matter, I think, is an important provision to underline as well.

One of the last things I want to talk about with this particular piece of legislation is that if a teacher has their certificate revoked, they can reapply and have their certificate reinstated after only five years. I would suggest

that members of our caucus are going to have some serious reservations about this particular provision. The fact that if someone has engaged in criminal misconduct, has engaged in sexual abuse and child pornography, and these items have been investigated and the certificate for teaching has been revoked—what we would suggest is that if you have engaged in a serious and violent sexual crime, you should never be in front of the classroom anymore. We're talking about protecting students in our classes. The very presence of somebody who has engaged in this activity is very, very serious.

What I would suggest is that word does get around. The fact is that we're going to be able to put these matters on a website. We're going to be able to put these disciplinary activities up for everybody to see. What would you do—what would any member of the Legislature do—if they knew that their kid's teacher had engaged, and was criminally involved, in a child sex crime? I know, as a parent, that there's no way I would want my student in that environment. There's no way.

student in that environment. There's no way.

So we have a bill here, a piece of legislation, that says we are protecting students—the Protecting Students Act, 2013—and we are adding a provision in this legislation that says that after five years that your certificate has been revoked, you can apply to become a teacher once again. As a father of three kids, this is a provision that I cannot accept. I cannot accept the fact that somebody who may be teaching my child has the ability to come back after five years and reapply to be a teacher, and could potentially be a teacher in a school once again.

If that happened in my child's school, I'm pretty sure that that teacher would never come back to that school. But that teacher might apply to another school; that teacher might apply to another school board. Even if that teacher doesn't come back to my child's school, he or she may be in another child's school. I would have serious reservations with any legislation that could potentially harm another child in another district, in another school board.

So I think we have to have a serious debate about this. This five-year reinstatement provision that's in this particular piece of legislation is, frankly, unacceptable, and I can say with a degree of certainty that members of the Ontario PC caucus, when speaking to this bill, will express their serious reservations about including a provision such as this in the legislation.

What I want to make very clear is that we are talking about people who have been investigated, who have been shown to have a manner or an activity that was questionable. They were investigated to the point that one of the items of penalty was the removal of their certificate of qualification to teach in the province of Ontario. So they have gone through a process whereby they had a serious offence and had their ability to teach in a school in Ontario revoked. Likely, there may have been a criminal process that was running parallel to what has transpired that may potentially have resulted in a charge.

0920

We cannot in good conscience talk about instituting a piece of legislation that, after a teacher has gone through the process and that investigation has led to a disciplinary action so significant as the removal of their certificate of qualification to teach in the province of Ontario, we would even consider reinstating that certificate of qualification and putting children at potential risk. I would state, as I've mentioned, with a degree of certainty that members of the Ontario PC caucus, when debating this particular piece of legislation, will have serious reservations with this bill. We think that this provision needs a radical modification to suggest that if you have been found guilty of a child sex crime, you do not teach in a classroom in the province of Ontario ever again. That is where we stand with this piece of legislation.

We appreciate the fact that Justice LeSage has gone in depth with a very serious, very thoughtful report on how to improve the College of Teachers, the intake, investigation and discipline procedures and outcomes, and the dispute resolution process. We appreciate the work that he has done. We appreciate that many of the recommendations that were stated in that report have found their way, finally, into legislation. We are disappointed that included in those provisions is the potential of having someone who has been convicted of a child sex crime reinstated in our schools. We're disappointed that it has taken so long for this debate to resume, because nothing is more important, for myself as a father and as a legislator, than to protect our children. We should be debating this because it's so important to so many people.

Let's not forget the victims of these child sex acts and crimes. Let's not forget about the life-altering experience to the negative that these victims have had—thousands, tens of thousands of victims across the province and across the country. We cannot lose sight of what happens to them. We must do whatever we can to make sure that those acts do not happen to another child. We can do that by preventing those very people who have engaged in those acts from teaching in front of a classroom of young kids ever again. We would like to see this Legislature come out with a forceful statement on behalf of victims of sex crimes to suggest that these teachers do not teach in front of a classroom ever again, and until that time we cannot support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to hear the previous speaker talk about this bill. I think he said some very good points, that at the core of it there are some young children who get hurt. When a child gets sexually abused, it stays with them for the rest of their life. Most of them will struggle for the rest of their lives. A few will make it through, and we're trying to learn from the ones who are able to cope. But for most of them, it means that this person—in this case here, this teacher—will have ruined this person's life for the rest of their life. You look at them through their lifetime and you will see that they will struggle throughout their lifetime. So the enormity of the crime is huge. How could you put it bigger than this? By your action, you ruin another person's life forever. Their opportunity to be happy, to be

productive, to have the life that everybody hopes for, is wiped away with one case of abuse. That's all it takes. If it's repeated, then the symptoms are way bigger.

Does it deserve fair punishment? Absolutely. But we have to find the right balance, where you punish those crimes to the full extent of the law, but at the same time, you protect teachers from being accused of a crime they did not commit.

The enormity of the crime is there. If they have committed abuse on children, they should be punished and I have no problem with this; live with the consequences of your actions. But if you did not, then—I don't think we've found the right balance yet.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

**Ms.** Helena Jaczek: I welcome this opportunity to take a couple of minutes to comment on the remarks made by the member from Cambridge on Bill 103.

In essence, what I heard him say was that generally he was supportive of the bill. I think we all share some very common values. We know that the vast majority of our teachers do an excellent job of supporting our students, but of course there are rare circumstances where the teachers do require discipline. They need a fair and transparent process.

In terms of some of the areas where he had some issues, first of all I want to point out that there are a couple of instances where our legislation has gone even further than Mr. Justice LeSage's recommendations. One of those is the mandatory revocation of a member's certificate for specific acts of sexual abuse or a prohibited act of child pornography under the Criminal Code. So our provision for mandatory revocation goes above and beyond Mr. Justice's LeSage's recommendations.

In terms of the reinstatement of the certificate that has been revoked for sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or a prohibited act, the legislation we're proposing says "for at least five years." I think it's important that we do have further discussion on this issue at committee. I'm informed that there has not been an instance, in fact, where a certificate has previously been reinstated. Of course, there's the additional fact that such a teacher with such a previous lifting of their certificate would have to convince the school board to actually hire them.

I think we do need further discussion on that, but we know from across the province, whether it be the Ontario Public School Boards' Association or the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario, we have had just very strong support for this particular legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm very pleased to stand up and speak to the member from Cambridge's comments on this bill. I actually listened with great interest to his comments, and I have to agree. I find it very troubling that there's any bill that allows for any allowance of any sexual predator into our classrooms after any period of time. I think if there's anything that didn't ever need any more conversation or any more consultation, it's allow-

ing sexual predators into our classrooms and into positions of trust after any period of time has passed, whether it's a year, five years or 10 years.

I can tell you with a great deal of certainty that if I knew that my child—I have two—was in a classroom with someone who has been charged and convicted of a sexual offence against a child, I would not be very happy about it. I don't think anyone who is a parent or anyone who cares a nickel about children would at all support allowing sexual predators—the possibility of a sexual predator—to be in a position of trust in a classroom, especially a teacher. I find that actually reprehensible.

I know we need to try to rehabilitate our criminals in society and all this. But you know what? The people they've affected—to get to the point where they're a convicted child sex offender, they've destroyed that child's life indefinitely, until the day they die. So to actually give them the leeway where they get five years and they can reapply to get a teacher's certificate to go back in the classroom isn't even remotely fair or square to the people they've hurt to get to that point in the first place.

If there's any piece of this bill that I don't think needs any more discussion in committee or needs any more discussion here, frankly, it's that provision that allows a teacher, after five years, to be able to have the possibility to stand in front of a classroom and influence young people. I think that in itself, in that bill, just that piece of it is reprehensible.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour again to stand in this House today and to make a couple of comments on the riveting presentation put forward by the member from Cambridge.

I do recall that it was six months ago, I believe—October 1—when the member first stood and began his lead on this. What I took out of what he said this morning was this: Never let anyone in this House forget the victims, because when a child is abused, that lingers forever.

I had a friend who was caught up in the Mount Cashel scandal years ago in St. John's, Newfoundland. I didn't know it at the time or until later in life, when he wrote a book detailing what had gone on with his abuse at the hands of a teacher, a priest, back when we were hanging out. I can see now how that affected him throughout his life. I think we never want to forget that.

My kids are of an age now where they're having kids. I have two granddaughters now, and one coming at the end of the month. I just cannot accept anyone laying a finger or a hand on those kids. I don't know what I would do. I think I might do something I would be severely punished for, Speaker.

But the other part of this is to not forget due process. I know that if you name somebody too soon, that stigma sticks for life as well. You can never get past the fact that you were named. You may beat the charge eventually, but if you were named, that stigma is there for life. We have to keep an eye on that as well.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Rob Leone: Once again, I'm pleased to also rise on behalf of my constituents of Cambridge. I know that every time the member for Windsor-Tecumseh speaks, he always mentions that. We should never forget the people who brought us here.

I'm also pleased that I finally got through my onehour lead on this particular piece of legislation, after six months. I think that we're hitting a milestone here by debating a very important piece of legislation.

I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, the member for Barrie and the member for Windsor-Tecumseh for their thoughtful comments.

I think that what I'm sensing is a degree of interest in talking about getting this bill right. I think that that is obviously the important factor here, that so much of this bill is so necessary that we have to modify, update, bring up to 2014 and modernize the Ontario College of Teachers. I think everyone sees that there is a particular need for that, and certainly Justice LeSage has outlined that.

But as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh did say, we can't forget about the victims. This is, as many people have mentioned, a life-altering experience that a person will have. I say that not as a positive thing; I say that as a very negative thing. The repercussions on victims of child sex crimes are life-lasting and life-altering, and people have difficulty coping every day.

Like the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, who is going to be a grandfather once again—and I congratulate him in advance for that—as a father, this is something that touches to the core of what we're doing here: protecting our kids every step of the way, each and every day that we're here.

I will take part and listen with interest to the debate of this bill. I encourage members to debate and talk about the process and how we can improve this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex has requested unanimous consent to stand down his lead. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Essex.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** I thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank my colleagues in the House for granting unanimous consent.

Of course, our critic, Peter Tabuns, is not here at the moment, unfortunately, but I know he anticipates, not with excitement—he is looking forward to speaking to the bill and relaying our concerns but our ultimate support for the provisions built into Bill 103, the Protecting Students Act.

Speaker, one of the things from the outset that I'd like to remind the House is that the bill was originally tabled on October 1, 2013, a full—I heard six months. I haven't done the math, but it seems like quite a long time ago, half a year ago, when we first introduced any action on behalf of this House to address the nature of the provisions of the bill: protecting students from sexual assault in our schools.

I question the priorities of the government when we see such a long time between the introduction of the bill and our ability to speak to the bill. That being said, we do welcome the opportunity at this point and hope that we can come together in a productive way to work out the details and to of course hopefully make the bill stronger.

Every morning when we enter the House, those who have 9 a.m. House duty have the ability to pray with the Speaker and to join in a moment of reflection. This morning, I woke up knowing that I was to speak on this bill, and I took that moment of reflection the Speaker offered us to be pensive about what this bill means to the children in our communities, in our province, who are at school.

I had an overwhelming feeling of, I guess, discomfort, thinking about how vulnerable children are in society. As the father of two young children, and being away from home so much, it's not that I miss the good times with them, as a parent; it's that I have this overwhelming feeling of fear in not being able to be there all the time to protect my kids. I know every other parent in this place feels the same thing, that we are so far away for so long that we aren't able to offer that protection that I think is really the most important job a parent can do.

I also believe that protection of the public and safety of the public is the most important job that we can do, that we are charged with in this place; not simply tinkering with economic measures or the various other bills that come before this place. When they have an emphasis on public safety, and particularly the safety and welfare of children, it should be our paramount concern and our priority. Unfortunately, again, we see—I'll have to point out the lag time between the introduction of the bill and the fact that we're now just starting our leads on it. It doesn't bode too well in terms of the confidence that I have in the government to make this a priority. I'm happy to be able to express that sincerely.

The bill recognizes that children are vulnerable in our schools and that there are cases that exist still and may exist in the future that require us to take measures to enforce and to relay to abusers that we take this offence seriously. Particularly, sexual assault and violence against children is one of the most egregious and heinous crimes that a person could commit, not only in Ontario but around the world. I don't think there's any jurisdiction that sees these crimes as anything other than that. So it is incumbent upon us to do absolutely everything that we can to protect them in our school system and to have the mechanisms in place to allow those teachers, within due process, to be charged and to suffer ramifications and suffer the penalties—and they should be harsh. Because again—as I stated, being so far away—we drop off our kids every morning and trust. We give our most precious

goods to our educators and to the system, and trust that they in turn are protecting our children in the way that we would ourselves. This bill, I believe, gives them the tools to be able to do that. That's why New Democrats are supportive of the provisions of the bill but also, of course, seek to make it stronger and to enshrine and to codify the protection mechanisms and also the penalties that would be built within it.

#### 0940

The amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act largely mirror the 49 recommendations from the 2012 LeSage report. I want to commend the member from Cambridge, who is the critic for the official opposition, who I think had a well-nuanced speech on this bill. I think it was really not the partisan type of rhetoric that we would normally expect around all the bills. He took a very clear approach to what the mechanisms do and how they would work, and I want to commend him on doing that. I certainly appreciate the information that I learned from him today. So thank you to the member from Cambridge.

We seek to work with all members in the House to bring this bill, hopefully expedite the bill, to committee, where we can have a more nuanced debate and discussion, and take in more information, to ensure that we aren't missing anything. In that, I think New Democrats hold the provisions of due process at the top. In our Criminal Code, we value due process. It is something that jurisdictions around the world look to us to seek guidance on, whether it be at the Supreme Court level or even simply in our provincial courts. We know that our process, in large effect, works well. We can discuss the punitive measures ad nauseam here, but let's ensure that process is there and that the rights and responsibilities of everyone are protected.

Many members made reference to ensuring that the identities of the accused prior to being found guilty or convicted should be protected, and I don't think anyone can argue that fact. We simply have to run the potential scenario through our heads and understand the ramifications of being found guilty before due process. That's something that I think we all understand in this House.

Of course, on the punitive side, I can't argue with the member from Cambridge when he says, "How can we, in fact, allow someone who has been found guilty of a heinous crime against a child back into the system, knowing that there is a chance of them repeating that?" I understand that argument. I understand it outside of the context of our education system. I understand that if someone—a murder case, a case of abuse that doesn't involve a child; we certainly can't understand, as civil people, as civil members of our society, that anyone should have the same rights or continue to have the same rights, especially when they've created so much long-lasting physiological and psychological damage to someone else.

But Speaker, we do live in a civil society where we recognize that we have systems, we have due process in our courts that allows people to redeem themselves, allows people to try to recover and allows people to pay

their debt to society. Whether they do life in prison, or 20 years or 15 years, that is something that is recognized at all levels of our court: that we have a punitive system and that we also allow them to pay their debt. It's one that I look forward to hearing on both sides of the spectrum at committee. It's one that I think is a debate that the broader public should have. But it's one that is very contentious and, again, I took that moment this morning to reflect on that nature. It's one that I can only imagine other members in this House are doing the same as they read the contents of this bill.

That provision would be the most contentious provision in the bill. Other than that, I think that many of them involve amendments, again, to the Ontario College of Teachers Act based on the LeSage report: one ensuring that a teacher's certificate is automatically revoked if he or she has been found guilty of sexual abuse or acts relating to child pornography, and that the teacher can apply for reinstatement after five years. Of course, I just mentioned that it's one we will need to debate and discuss and take in broader information about.

Again, I hope that we relay that to the people in our constituencies, because ultimately, they have sent us here to make these decisions. Let's take in as much information from them as possible to make an informed and wise decision that follows, again, the principles of due process in our court system, in our legal system.

In other provisions, "Requiring school boards to inform the college when they have restricted a teacher's duties or dismissed him or her for misconduct;" as well, "Allowing the college to share information with the school board if the subject of a complaint poses an immediate risk to a student"—I think that makes sense. An information system to the schools is a safeguard that may relay some confidence to the public and to parents and one that I think makes some sense.

"—Requiring the college to publish all decisions from its discipline committee;

"—Imposing new timelines to resolve cases more quickly and efficiently;

"—Avoiding potential conflicts of interest by preventing union or association representatives from sitting on the college's council, where college policy is developed and approved;

"—Requiring that a disciplinary panel include a principal or vice-principal when hearing a matter relating to the conduct of a principal or vice-principal."

Now, those two provisions there will be interesting to hear more about. I look forward to potentially hearing from the Minister of Education about the effects of those provisions: "requiring a disciplinary panel include a principal or vice-principal when hearing a matter relating to the conduct of a principal or vice-principal." I'm assuming that we will want to take in some institutional knowledge of someone who is in that same position when a disciplinary panel is enacted. That makes sense to me.

But on the other side, just prior to that provision is "avoiding potential conflicts of interest by preventing union or association representatives from sitting on the college's council, where college policy is developed or approved." I wonder if those two principles conflict, because unions or associations have an obligation to represent the labour rights of a teacher or of their representative. They also have a fiduciary responsibility when there are economic impacts on that worker, and it's not to say that those representatives on the unions or associations wouldn't, in fact, be on side or would really be biased. I don't think anybody would think that anyone would be biased, but I think they have an obligation to be represented there. I wonder if we're missing an opportunity, again, to ensure there is due process and that all relevant bodies are represented when such an important situation is occurring, that we've covered all of our bases and all input has been taken in.

Again, I believe that this bill is something that is warranted, and it warrants our immediate attention and warrants us to make it a priority. I hope that the bill receives, again, an expedited emphasis in this House where the minister makes it a priority and keeps the pressure on this so that we can ensure and infuse some confidence into the broader public, into parents like myself and like the member from Cambridge, like all others who rely on our public school system to provide a good-quality, safe education for our children but also protects them and understands that it is a universe that should be one that promotes the education of children and not, in fact, puts them into vulnerable situations.

Unfortunately, we have some historical reference of where systems have failed our children at large. We have, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke, the Mount Cashel event, and we have the history of the residential school system in Canada, where so many native children were abused, and we seek reparation for that. We seek to ensure that that never happens again. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is just finalizing their report and submissions. We've heard really, really touching testimony on how the system failed.

Here is an opportunity for us to ensure that that never happens again within our public education system. It's one that I believe is welcomed by all members of this House. It's a conversation that has really not had an opportunity to be spoken about at large, because—I really don't know why we haven't. So many times in this building, politics gets in the way of policy, which is really unfortunate. Here's an opportunity for us to show the people out there that we can actually do the right thing.

I certainly offer my assistance to the minister and to the government to ensure that this bill receives passage but also that it receives full scrutiny and complies with due process in our democratic process, and also is as strong as it possibly can be, within the Charter of Rights—because we have to be cognizant of that too, of course—but also that all of the provisions that our families out there are asking us to put into the bill are fleshed out and reviewed.

Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity. I truly appreciate standing up and giving some comments here.

Mme France Gélinas: En français, deux minutes?

M. Taras Natyshak: En français, deux minutes? Ça va être difficile pour moi de le faire en français pour deux minutes—

 $\mathbf{M}^{\mathrm{me}}$  France Gélinas: Ah non?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Non.

I certainly hope that members have understood where we're coming from, here on the Ontario New Democratic side. I welcome comments from my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I'm pleased to comment on the remarks by the member from Essex.

I wanted to pick up on a theme that he mentioned, which was co-operation on this. Every so often, this Legislature amazes me when we come together to do the right thing, and I hope that this is going to be one of these areas.

Mr. Justice LeSage made a number of recommendations. This legislation is around implementing those recommendations. I think we've heard, in some way or another, from all three parties that there is a lot of consensus around supporting what Mr. Justice LeSage told us and these recommendations.

I want to report to you, Speaker, that we have also had a lot of consensus within the system. We've worked very closely with the College of Teachers to implement the recommendations that could be done without legislation. We have also had a lot of co-operation from the various stakeholder organizations in the education sector. So I hope that we can all, both outside this House and inside this House, come together and make this happen quickly.

Just on some of the specific topics that the member from Essex mentioned: He mentioned the matter of frivolous and vexatious complaints. There's no doubt that the College of Teachers gets complaints against teachers which are not founded. One of the things that the legislation does is allow the registrar of the college to deal with the frivolous and vexatious and get it out of the way more expeditiously so that you're not taking an innocent teacher and dragging them through the mud.

On the matter of serious sexual misconduct, on the other hand, we have actually gone further than Mr. Justice LeSage recommended and have required mandatory revocation of the licence.

The member raised a couple of other issues. One is the matter of members of teacher union executives not sitting on the governing board of the college, and another is having principals sit on review committees when a principal is subject to review. Actually, in both cases, the same principles are at play. The purpose of the college is to protect the public, i.e. kids. On the other hand, when you come to review, you should have review by your peers. So the principles are consistent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: This has been an interesting day today. I'm quite impressed by the member from Essex,

his collegial nature and his comments on our critic, Mr. Leone's remarks from earlier this morning.

Mr. Leone, of course, is a teacher; he's a university professor. He spoke of his family—he has a PhD. There are different descriptions of what that acronym stands for.

But I'd just say this: I think there's agreement here. This bill, again, is another example of the Wynne-McGuinty government trying to slip something in here. This is what concerns me. It troubles me. The bill itself is in response to Justice LeSage—we're all familiar with where the genesis of this came from—but I've heard it from my constituents as well.

The suspicious nature—when we're dealing with children, there should be no tolerance. If someone has violated—if the crime has been proven, there should be

process. We agree with that as well.

The college itself is backed by the union, basically. I hate to say that. In the Royal Commission on Learning that was done by the NDP some years ago, it said that the college should be a professional college, like doctors and nurses, to make it a real profession. But now it's dominated by the unions so that the number of votes are—I'm a little off topic there; they need to be at arm's length. If the court has found them guilty, they should never be allowed in a classroom again. Okay? They should be on the list of sexual offenders, predators, if it's been proven in court.

At the same time, teachers are exposed to vulnerable accusations from people who have other motives. Because I know—my wife and daughter and other members of my family are teachers—it's a tough job, a very difficult job. But they are leaders, and in that role, they're respected and they're held in esteem. And if one of them violates it, it's ruining the whole profession, so they should be dealt with swiftly and firmly. That's why I can't support the bill under section 6—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

M. Michael Mantha: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever et d'ajouter des commentaires à ceux de mon collègue d'Essex, qui a donné un vraiment bon aperçu du projet de loi et des « concerns » qu'on a comme parti néodémocrate. Mais aussi, un des sujets qu'il a apporté à notre attention ce matin c'est les priorités du gouvernement. Quand on regarde ce projet de loi-ci, qui a été présenté au mois d'octobre, voilà six mois, ce qui est beaucoup de temps, c'est un projet de loi qui « deserves » l'attention nécessaire. C'est important car on parle de nos enfants à l'école. Nous voilà où nous avons eu un vraiment bon projet de loi dont on devrait discuter, mais ça fait six mois qu'on ne s'en est pas parlé. Ce que nous questionnons comme parti néo-démocrate : où sont les priorités du gouvernement?

L'autre sujet qu'il a apporté à l'attention de la Chambre, c'est le processus, et faire certain qu'il y a une méthode pour questionner et faire une investigation, non seulement pour la personne qui est probablement coupable d'actions inappropriées envers nos enfants,

mais faire certain aussi que les plaintes qui ne sont pas justifiées sont aussi explorées pour faire certain que la bonne représentation est donnée à ces personnes-là, tout en gardant l'idée en tête qu'il y a un processus.

On a une cour judiciaire pour prendre soin des personnes qui sont trouvées coupables et puis que jamais, jamais, on n'excuse que les personnes trouvées coupables—qu'elles sont traitées à la plus haute démarche de notre loi et puis qu'elles absorbent toute pénitence envers elles sur leurs actions envers nos enfants.

Avec ça, aussi, mon collègue et moi avons regardé les implémentations du rapport de M. LeSage. Oui, il y a beaucoup de ces implémentations-là qu'on regarde à implémenter. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 103. I want to thank and recognize the thousands of teachers in our public school system across Ontario in terms of supporting our students' learning needs.

Today is the 63rd annual Sounds of Toronto, a high school music concert at Roy Thomson Hall. Every year it is a successful event bringing all high school students together to perform. I know that hundreds of teachers and students across the Toronto District School Board have volunteered in supporting our student learners. So I want to do a shout-out for them.

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With regard to Bill 103, it is there to support and protect our students' safety. This is of utmost importance. As a former school board trustee, I recognize the importance of the students' safety, because without safety in our classrooms, without safety in our school environment, a child cannot learn. The proposed legislation, if passed, will ensure greater transparency, accountability and efficiency in terms of the teacher disciplinary process, and furthermore, it lines up with other self-regulated professions. I'm not sure the member for Durham understands that. At present, in the College of Nurses, as a member of the College of Nurses, if a member is found guilty in terms of sexual abuse: automatic revoking of the licence to practise—end of story. They have to be proven before the courts and there's a due process that the member talked about earlier.

The other piece here is in the explanatory note. I'm not sure that some of the members have read it. I want to read it on record. Section 3, of the explanatory note: "The new subsection 17(2.1) provides that a panel of a committee that hears or reviews a matter relating to a principal or vice-principal must include at least one person who is or was a principal or vice-principal." Again, that ensures transparency.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, you have two minutes for a response.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** I want to thank the Minister of Education for clarifying some of my questions. Again, I look forward to having, a little bit, even, a clearer perspective on these two provisions when it comes to the re-

forms to who is represented on the college and also—but I do understand the nature of having someone, a principal, attend a disciplinary panel. So thank you for that, members from Durham, Scarborough–Agincourt et mon ami, le membre pour Algoma–Manitoulin.

Again, I can't reiterate enough that this should be a priority in this House for all members. I will do my part to ensure that our caucus and our party applies enough pressure on the government to make it a priority. I see it as something that I think will resonate within the broader community and parents across Ontario, one that is needed, of course, to promote safe schools, to promote the values that we hold near and dear to our school systemthat it is a safe place and we do not accept any form of abuse. We do not tolerate it, and we will impart or push the full extent of the law, and use the full extent of the law, and strengthen those laws to ensure that our children feel safe and our families and parents and feel safe sending our kids to school, and that it is an environment where only learning and love and happiness exists. This is how we can do it, through some of the mechanisms in this bill.

I look forward to it receiving a vote through second reading and going to committee, where we can hear more testimony from experts who I'm sure are looking forward to discussing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise to join the debate around Bill 103, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 with respect to discipline and other related matters. The lawyers are probably happy with that one, but I think I'll stick with the snappier name, the Protecting Students Act.

This legislation is, of course, geared to making certain key changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, and reflects some of the important recommendations of the Honourable Patrick J. LeSage, stemming from his 2011-12 review of the college's investigation and disciplinary procedures, the outcomes of same and also dispute resolution programs. In August 2011, he was retained by the Ontario College of Teachers to review its intake, investigation and discipline procedures and outcomes, and its dispute resolution program, and to consider whether or not they protect the public interest.

He was also asked, more specifically, to examine and consider issues including communication and publication practices; impartiality and timelines; training and legal support; appropriateness of disciplinary outcomes; confidentiality; and the handling of concerns about its members. As part of that process, he undertook discussions with key stakeholder groups and other interested parties and reviewed relevant reports.

Some of the recommendations of that report have been acted on already. Last January, the college began posting the outcomes of disciplinary procedures on their website, in the interests of transparency. But of course, some of the recommendations require legislative change, which is why we are debating Bill 103 here today.

As Justice LeSage noted in his report, it is an enormous privilege to self-regulate. As John F. Kennedy once said, to whom much is given, much is expected.

In his report, Justice LeSage concluded that the college faces two essential challenges: transparency and efficiency. Moreover, the college, like any self-regulating body, is in place first and foremost to safeguard the public interest. To this end, all of his recommendations focus on allowing the college to be more transparent and efficient, thereby serving the public interest most effectively. These are measures designed to enhance parents' confidence in the system; empower educators themselves to regulate their own profession more effectively; and improve and optimize the investigation and disciplinary process, which had become burdensome and non-transparent over time.

It is also hoped that Justice LeSage's report will help differentiate, in the minds of the public and parents, the distinct roles and functions of the College of Teachers and individual school boards. It is hoped that this increased understanding improves not just institutional transparency but also familiarity, comfort, confidence and trust.

So we turn to Bill 103. Were the bill before us to be approved, all of Justice LeSage's 49 recommendations would be implemented, either through the proposed statutory amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, and associated regulations, or by the Ontario College of Teachers through bylaw or policy.

Some of the notable provisions of Bill 103 include:

—publishing all decisions of the college's discipline committee;

—outlining clear rules for the use of the alternative dispute resolution process, and confirming that no cases involving sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or child pornography would be eligible for alternative dispute resolution;

—clarifying when school boards must inform the Ontario College of Teachers of cases where the board has restricted the duties of a teacher or dismissed them for misconduct;

—empowering the Ontario College of Teachers to take swift action and share information with the school board if it is determined that the subject of the complaint may pose an immediate risk to the student;

—imposing timelines to resolve cases at the investigation stage, when appropriate;

—requiring that a panel hearing a matter relating to a principal or vice-principal must include a principal or vice-principal; and

—ensuring a teacher's certificate is automatically revoked if they have been found guilty of specific acts of sexual abuse, or for acts relating to child pornography.

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On this final point, I should note, as other members of my caucus have, that if a teacher has their certificate revoked, they are at liberty to reapply and have their certificate reinstated after a five-year period has passed. This is a jarring and unsettling detail, Speaker. The notion that teachers who have ruined the lives of children will be able to rejoin the ranks of educators after just five years is problematic. I think most parents, and indeed most people across Ontario, would argue that this penalty is far too flimsy. We must ensure that tougher penalties are in place for those who target and take advantage of the most vulnerable among us.

The repercussions of these kinds of incidents can linger for years, if not a lifetime. Just as the influence of an exceptional teacher can open a young person to new possibilities, a negative influencer such as an abuser could wall them off and skew their entire world view.

Childhood and adolescence is a formative period, as we are all well aware, and Bill 103 does not appear to truly take that to heart. We need to protect students from violence, both sexual and nonsexual, and the idea that a teacher who has committed such an act could go back to work after five years is chilling, to be perfectly frank.

In addition to this glaring flaw, I think that the detail around incident reporting could be made more robust. It is essential that we do our best to ensure that our young

people are safe.

While I was encouraged to hear the minister speak about the need for an open and transparent investigative process with regard to cases of sexual abuse or child pornography, I would suggest that making this aspect of the process stronger and fairer only raises more questions about why the penalties attached to these offences are so slight. If the most even-handed and level-headed legal process concludes that a teacher has committed these grossly inappropriate or indecent acts, why then would we leave the door open to the possibility of repeat offences?

As it turns out, we have heard government members speak out along these same lines, saying we need to make sure that type of situation is never repeated again. The minister herself indicated as much, saying, "We don't believe there is any reasonable circumstance where there is a confirmed case of sexual abuse or child pornography where a teacher should be able to keep their teaching certificate."

This invites the question: If that is indeed the government's thinking, why has this legislation included the five-year reinstatement provision? Is it a failsafe against an investigative and review mechanism that is sufficiently flawed that measures such as this are needed? Is it because on some level they worry that in rare cases the complaints process invites abuse for false complaints? If that is so, maybe we need to go over these aspects of the legislation and repair them at source so that the legislation serves both students and educators to the best of its ability. This bill does not go nearly far enough. Steeper and stiffer penalties will draw the lines clearly and protect professional standards.

For our part, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party would prohibit any teacher found to have committed sexual violence against a student from having their certificate reinstated. We owe that much peace of mind to Ontario parents and to children.

At the same time, we also can't offer enough praise for the excellent work that our educators do, often under trying circumstances and while trying to balance a range of interests. We are blessed to have the perspective of a number of educators and school board trustees in this very Legislature. In our own caucus, I believe there are a number of former teachers and members either married or related to teachers. This seasons their debate and helps to really enrich the quality of discussion around bills such as this one before us today.

Teachers, of course, are regularly called to go above and beyond, and to that benefit of our children and our society they do so unflinchingly. We have all seen the limits of this conviction in tragic news stories around school shootings where teachers have laid down their lives for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Don Standen, his son, Matt Standen, and a local reporter from our area, Denis Langlois. Welcome to Queen's Park and have a fabulous day.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'd like to introduce, sitting in the west members' gallery, Thomas Blackmore, who is here today to watch the proceedings. Welcome to Oueen's Park, Thomas.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I just noticed that Tim Jones from Artscape is here. I'd like to welcome him to the chamber today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome Jason Nicol to the public galleries today. Jason is the father of our page from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Kathryn Nicol. Welcome, Jason.

**Hon. Michael Coteau:** On behalf of my colleague from Don Valley West, I'd like to introduce Myung Joo Kim, mother of Justin Kim, who will be joining us later today in the members' gallery.

**Mr. Rob Leone:** I notice that my good friend Tommy Blackmore is here today to witness question period in its fine form.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to welcome, in the west gallery later this morning, members from the company TransAlta, from Alberta, who are visiting us here today—and many members have installations in their ridings—they are: Mr. Brian Heaman and Ms. Laura Arnold. I ask you to welcome them to the Legislature today.

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** A class from Thornlea public school in my riding is supposed to be visiting today. I'm not sure if they made it yet, but I wanted to introduce them.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to extend a special welcome to Mr. Wayne Clancy, who is president and chief innovation officer for Future Strategies Inc.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to draw the attention of the members of the assembly to Mr. Don Jaffray, the executive director of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. He's also a member of our cabinet committee on poverty reduction. He's here to watch the House today.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I'd like to welcome Tim Jones from Artscape, Meagan Boyle and Clark Rabbior to the Legislature this morning. Welcome, Tim, to your first question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the Speaker's gallery. With us, we have a former member from the 37th, 38th, 39th—and Speaker for the 39th—Parliament, from Elgin—Middlesex—London, Speaker Steve Peters—my other brother that's not Joe.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, I have visitors from the riding of Brant: the manager of developmental services for the Family Counselling Centre of Brant, Mr. Keith Anderson, and his guest, Robert Rowe. Welcome, and we're glad you're here with us.

It is now time for question period.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Acting Premier: Today the OPP claimed that they don't know exactly when 20 of the 24 computers were illegally accessed by Peter Faist. How can you stand in this assembly and say definitively that no computers were accessed after February 11 when the OPP stated today they could have been accessed up until March 20? Can you tell me exactly what you know that the OPP doesn't?

Hon. John Milloy: I think members of the Legislature are aware that an officer with the Ontario Provincial Police appeared in front of the justice committee this morning. He had two messages for that committee. The first is that the investigation is centred on the former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty and that, in fact, it had nothing to do with the current Premier. In fact, I invite members to go on the Globe and Mail website. They may enjoy the headline of the article that's up about that appearance, "No Evidence Wynne Oversaw Document Purge, OPP Says."

The second thing, and this is just as important, that the OPP conveyed to the committee is that politicians should stay out of OPP investigations, that politicians have no business in OPP investigations and that a politician getting involved in an OPP investigation may, in fact, put that investigation in jeopardy. Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member should follow the advice of the Ontario Provincial Police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would suggest that the honourable minister actually check the transcripts. I actually sat through committee, and here's what else he said. He said those computers could have been accessed up until March 20. He said that the Premiers' transition from Mr. McGuinty to Ms. Wynne happened almost immediately. He said that people that were staffing the transition between Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty happened almost on a daily basis. He also said he enjoyed appearing before our committee.

I'm going to ask you again: what could you possibly know about the access of these computers that the OPP doesn't know? How can you stand here in the Legislature and say without a shadow of a doubt that no computers were wiped under the watch of the Wynne administration? Are you now taking a page out of Laura Miller's book and calling the OPP liars?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. I know that this is a certain time in our history where things get heated. I'm going to offer caution to all members. There is my concern about parliamentary language, and let's just make sure we don't go there.

The Acting Premier.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm quite happy to quote from officer Duval of the Ontario Provincial Police, who appeared in front of the committee. Let me give one exchange he had with the member from Toronto—Danforth. Here is the quote: "I can tell you that based on the information-to-obtain that I produced, it's centred on the action of Mr. David Livingston only."

I'd also like to share with the honourable members what the officer had to say as well: "I've been an officer for 17 years. It is an unusual request for a detective or an investigator to testify on the evidence that's been uncovered, as we are doing during this investigation. It's very unusual. But please understand that if you require me to answer questions on specific evidence, I could potentially threaten the prosecution on any criminal offences that may resolve from this investigation. There is a significant public interest in preserving the integrity of a criminal investigation."

I know that the honourable member likes staying up late watching Ellery Queen on television, but let's leave this to the Ontario Provincial Police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I actually have a Netflix program for the minister to watch, Orange Is the New Black. I hope you look good in orange.

I'd like to say this to the minister: What the OPP detective constable also said to the assembly is that while David Livingston is right now the person of interest, they could potentially expand their search warrants as well as potential ITOs. That means you're not out of the clear yet, my friend.

I have a question for the Acting Premier. If they're so concerned—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education will come to order, the Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order, and it's a little late, but the Minister of the Environment will come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why didn't the government launch an internal investigation into the destruction of documents, or the alleged destruction of documents, after the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, stated in her report in June 2013 that that had happened? Were you afraid of what the results might be because you knew Peter Faist was still on the payroll with the Liberal Party?

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Hon. John Milloy: I would remind the member that when the Information and Privacy Commissioner's report came out, we responded almost immediately to all of her non-legislative recommendations. Action was taken to put in place the proper regime for record-keeping. I would also point her to a piece of legislation which has been introduced in this Legislature which responds to some of the legislative recommendations of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

This Premier-Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Member from Simcoe North, come to order.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Premier Wynne has taken her obligation very, very seriously, and we have seen significant activity over the past year to make sure that documents are properly maintained by this government.

#### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Acting Premier: It's very clear that the Premier did not take her job seriously. She pretends she wasn't Premier of Ontario for six weeks between February and March of last year.

On March 19, your deputy director of human resources, Emily Marangoni, advised the manager of information technology to remove the special administrative rights used by Peter Faist. How did Emily Marangoni know to have this access removed on March 19, and why did she do so on March 19? Answer the question.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's go back to this morning. We had an officer of the Ontario Provincial Police appear in front of the committee—he himself admitted that this is an extraordinary situation—in which he outlined two things. First of all, the investigation involves Mr. David Livingston—there are allegations which are not proven; this is a very serious matter—and the time in which Premier McGuinty was in office. The second thing that he stressed is that it is not for members of Parliament, it is not for elected politicians, to try to play amateur detective here.

Let us allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. They will reach whatever conclusions they reach, and then we will be in a position to respond. The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the Acting Premier wants to talk about amateur hour, he should read the ITO reference to his government and their previous Premier and what bureaucrats said about their government.

But anyway, I will go back to this: What we know is that the OPP could charge further individuals. We do know computers could have been accessed up until March 20. We do know that the Premier's transition took place almost immediately, and it confirmed that when Kathleen Wynne won the leadership on January 26, she took access to that office almost immediately.

When was the first time the Premier, the Minister of Government Services, who is also the House leader, and the Deputy Premier met with David Livingston or any member of her transition team to discuss the deleted emails and the gas plants scandal? Let us know, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Acting Premier?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I will go to Officer Duval of the Ontario Provincial Police and quote his words: "I can tell you that based on the information to obtain that I've produced, it centred"—obviously he means the investigation—"on the action of Mr. David Livingston only." In fact, the member from Toronto—Danforth goes on and says, "Have more warrants been executed than this?" And the officer says, "No."

You're not getting anywhere across the way with this. Again, let me remind members what some of the media are saying about this dog and pony show. Globe and Mail, April 1: "The Conservative leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to back them up are reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

The Toronto Star, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show."

Toronto Star, April 1: "Every time" the leader— The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: I can go on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you can't. Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality here is that this is a government that is not telling the true story to the people of this province. They're not telling the whole story to the people of this province; it is very clear from the OPP's ITO. We know, for example, that these computers could have been accessed up until March 20. We know that the transition took place very quickly between the former Premier and the current Premier. We know, for example, that many members of that former Premier's staff are still working with this government, including in

Now, let's talk about David Nicholl. You threw him under the bus yesterday. When is Kathleen Wynne going to send you out of town, too?

Interjections.

that minister's office.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy, I'm trying to address. As I warned earlier, this is getting desperately close. That was too close for my comfort, and I'll ask the member—and all members—to refrain from making any references whatsoever to truth-telling.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm a very patient individual. I'll quote Officer Duval once again. In an exchange with the member from Toronto–Danforth about the investigation, he said, "I can tell you that based on the information to obtain that I produced, it's centred"—meaning the investigation—"on the actions of Mr. David Livingston only."

But let me go back to my quotes. I never thought I'd do this, but I'm going to quote Margaret Wente in this morning's Globe: "Despite the rantings of the Progressive Conservative leader ... there's nothing to link" the Premier "to the gas plant scandal....

"Even my conservative friends ... think" the Leader of the Opposition "is bad news. He comes across as a smalltown bully. His political misjudgments just keep piling up. His attacks on" the Premier "over the gas plant scandal are both shrill and unnecessary."

I think Margaret Wente speaks for herself.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms.** Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Does the Liberal government believe that Liberal operatives should be offering their full co-operation to the OPP's investigation into the gas plant scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I will go to the OPP officer, Mr. Duval, who appeared in front of the committee, and I will provide a quote of what he said this morning: "It is my understanding, however, that the OPP has received co-operation from senior government officials in this matter. There has never been an issue."

The government has provided full co-operation. In terms of the committee itself, members are aware that the Premier has appeared several times; I've appeared in front of the committee; the Minister of Energy. We are offering the fullest co-operation to the Ontario Provincial Police as they undertake this very important undertaking.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is, this morning at committee, the OPP confirmed that Liberal operatives, including one who worked for the Ontario Liberal Party up until this very weekend, declined to provide a statement to the OPP. Does the Acting Premier think that's acceptable?

Hon. John Milloy: I would urge anyone who the OPP approaches to be fully co-operative. As I said, on this side of the Legislature, when it comes to anyone who is involved with or works for our government, we have

been fully co-operative. The OPP confirmed that this morning.

I think there have been other references that were made in front of the committee about the co-operation with this government. We certainly take this matter seriously, but at the same time, I provide the same caution to the leader of the third party: What we learned this morning from the Ontario Provincial Police is that it's best for politicians not to involve themselves in an investigation and to allow the OPP to reach conclusions independently and not jeopardize the proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Acting Premier tell us why key Liberal operatives, Liberals who he and his team worked with for many years and through many campaigns, may have refused to talk to police? Does he know why they would have wanted to refuse to talk to police?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, all I can do is quote the officer—I apologize to the inspector; I should have used his proper title. Inspector André Duval with the OPP said, "It is my understanding, however, that the OPP has received co-operation from senior government officials in this matter."

The OPP have clearly stated at the committee this morning, and also in the documents before the court, that in this case the accusations are against one person—they are unfounded accusations—Mr. David Livingston, the former chief of staff to the former Premier. The OPP obviously has freedom to ask or question any individual. Of course, I would encourage everyone to co-operate fully with them.

Speaking on behalf of the government, I can say that our government is co-operating, as was outlined by Inspector Duval this morning.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also to the Acting Premier. We learned today that the government's own cybersecurity unit was conducting an active internal investigation of the wiping of data in the Premier's office. Was the Premier's office aware of this?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, there is an active OPP investigation going on. As has been outlined in the documents that were produced on Thursday in the court, it involves the actions of the former chief of staff to the former Premier, Mr. David Livingston. They are serious allegations; everyone acknowledges that. They are unproven.

What we learned at committee this morning are two things. First of all, they involved that period of time when Premier McGuinty was Premier, not the current Premier. The second is that we should not be conducting police investigations here on the floor of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's why they should have called a public inquiry a year ago, Speaker.

The Premier has indicated that she was in the dark about key details of computers being wiped in the Premier's office until newspaper reports emerged, Speaker. Now, how is that possible if the government's own cybersecurity unit was investigating?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, last Thursday, there were some documents made public about an investigation that was being undertaken by the Ontario Provincial Police. That document spoke about one individual who there are accusations about, and that was confirmed in front of the committee this morning. What it said, Mr. Speaker, was that they were pursuing these accusations, potential wrongdoing on the course of Mr. David Livingston, the former chief of staff to the former Premier. What we heard this morning, Mr. Speaker, was a confirmation of that. It did not involve the current Premier, who has answered numerous questions here in the Legislature and to the media

The other piece of advice, Mr. Speaker, is that politicians should keep their noses out of this, and we shouldn't be having a police investigation here on the floor of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Gee, Speaker, I hope the Liberals have learned a lot more than that from what's going on with the gas plant scandal cover-up.

Speaker, the Liberal government keeps insisting that they will be open and accountable—that they are open and accountable—and that they will be sharing all information. But what people see are key Liberal operatives refusing to respond to OPP requests for interviews and a Premier who is frantically firing people and acting shocked when the public hears details of multiple investigations going on under her nose and in her office.

Is this the brand of Liberal accountability that the people of Ontario expect? Is this good enough for the people of Ontario?

**Hon. John Milloy:** No, Mr. Speaker, what they are seeing is theatrics on the part of the opposition, who are trying to position themselves as police officers. This is a very serious matter, and the fact of the matter is, there is a tradition in this province that when the police are undertaking their work, politicians get out of their way.

I have some quotes for the NDP as well. Let me quote the Toronto Star on March 30: The leader of the NDP "indulged in conventional opposition mischief by implying police were 'now focusing on questions about the period after" the Premier was "sworn in and became Premier"—a clear misreading of the OPP documents."

The Globe and Mail, March 31: "There is nothing in the documents that suggests any records were deleted after Ms. Wynne was sworn into office on February 11, 2013."

Let's let these third parties speak for themselves in the analysis of the mischief that is going on from the opposition.

#### PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games. Minister, you've commissioned a shipyard in Belfast, Maine, to custom-build you a 45-foot limousine boat for the games. Let me remind you: Limousine boating is not a Pan Am sport. Neither is exotic Liberal spending.

Since there's no limo boat line item in the Pan Am budget, can you please tell the taxpayers, Minister, how much will this ship cost?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, another question, another—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Michael Chan: —the Pan/Parapan American Games. Speaker, what the member opposite is doing is, he wants to tear down the Hamilton stadium; he wants to tear down the Milton Velodrome; he wants to tear down the aquatic centre; he wants to tear down the athletes' village.

The members opposite, Speaker, want to run down our athletes who have been training their whole lives to compete in these games. They want to run down the coaches who prepare our great athletes. They want to run down our games planners and everything they work so hard for. Speaker, they want to tear down our relationships with PASO nations. They want to tear down the spirit of the games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** Minister, if there is anyone responsible for tearing down and destroying the spirit of the Pan Am Games, it's you.

Minister, hiding spending doesn't reduce spending. You have awarded yet another foreign contract, to Trefoil Marine, to build your lavish limo boat plus three water taxis. Clearly, you don't know anything about this, so let me fill you in. This company is renowned for tech-savvy and high cost. Even the company president has said, "People would look at the price and say, 'They're out of their mind,' but that's the price they go for." And just because you want to be cool in front of your dignitary friends doesn't mean you can help yourself to unlimited taxpayer funds.

Minister, I'm going to ask you again: How much money is your limo boat costing to build, transport here, and operate?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. Carry on.

Hon. Michael Chan: We are working very hard to deliver the Pan Am Games. According to the president of PASO, the international body for Pan Am—the president said, "Ontario will host the best-ever Pan and Parapan American Games"—in Ontario.

Look at our standing. So far, the capital projects are all on time, on budget or under budget. Recently, we reforecasted the budget down \$49 million. That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Chan: Recently, again, we rolled out the transportation framework and we rolled out the security framework. We are building the best-ever games in Ontario.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Acting Premier. When Peter Faist was allegedly in the Premier's office deleting emails, he had a contract with the Liberal Party and the Liberal caucus.

Can the Acting Premier tell Ontarians who was paying Peter Faist for his work at that time? Was it the Liberal

Party or the caucus?

**Hon. John Milloy:** As I say, Mr. Speaker, I'm a very, very patient individual. We have commented before on Peter Faist and his work that he did for the Liberal caucus under the former Premier, and the work that he did under the Ontario Liberal Party.

The honourable member is standing up here today and asking what I believe are detailed questions related to an ongoing police investigation. I'm quite shocked, considering the fact that he was in committee this morning and would have heard Inspector Duval give a very clear warning to members of the Legislature of the fact that you respect the police investigation, and you do not conduct a police investigation on the floor of the Legislature.

In fact, he may himself be jeopardizing the police investigation by engaging in this type of behaviour in the Legislature. It really is beneath that honourable member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I believe these are straightforward questions, and I expect a straightforward answer from the

Acting Premier.

OPP documents allege that Peter Faist came into the Premier's office and wiped out computers, and was under contract to the Liberal Party and caucus. Will the government provide Peter Faist's invoices for his work that day and for any other work wiping out government computers?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we have spoken in the House about Peter Faist's involvement both with the Liberal caucus service bureau and the Ontario Liberal Party—the first, under the former Premier, and the second, up until last Sunday. We have offered this information to the proper authorities.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make clear that we will let the police reach whatever conclusions they want. We have no indication that the invoices or any of the work done are in any way related to the allegations about the former chief of staff in the former Premier's office.

Again, I warn the honourable member, as Inspector Duval said this morning, "If you require me to answer questions on specific evidence, I could potentially threaten the prosecution on any criminal offences that may resolve from this investigation."

I think all members should take the advice of Inspector Duval to heart.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Grant Crack:** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last year, the government announced a number of changes to social assistance across the province. These changes were a first step in a plan to reform Ontario's social assistance programs, with the objective of removing barriers and increasing opportunities for everyone to participate in the workforce.

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Since the start of the process to reform social services in the province, many of my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell would like to know what changes they can expect. Some constituents have mentioned that there might be a merger of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Speaker, though you, can the minister clarify if this merger is in our government's plans, and could he let us know of the good work being done to reform social assistance in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to respond to the honourable member's question. I want to speak a bit about our future plans for social assistance reform. In particular, I get a lot of questions about the merger of OW and ODSP. Our government is committed to making social assistance work better for our clients. Our plan is guided by the advice we received from the Lankin-Sheikh report and by the conversations we're having with clients, advocates and other partners. Let me be very clear about something: Our government has considered the recommendation that both programs be merged, but we believe keeping them intact is the best way forward. For this reason we will not-I repeat, not-be merging the two programs. We've heard loud and clear from virtually everybody that this isn't the way to go. So we're looking forward to improving the programs as they exist.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Minister.

There's always an interest in the way social assistance programs are delivered across this great province, and providing services in an effective manner is important. Ontarians expect services that are easy to access and are responsive to their needs. However, it's absolutely crucial that social assistance recipients understand that reform is necessary at times to ensure that the system works better for the long term.

Speaker, it's very quiet in here. The minister indicated that Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program will not be merged.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It was. Please finish.

**Mr. Grant Crack:** The minister indicated that Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program will not be merged. Could he please tell us if there are still ways we can improve how the programs operate or if recipients should expect the status quo?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The Speaker needs help, but not necessarily that kind.

Absolutely not. It means that instead of spending time on merging programs, we're focusing on making both programs work better at supporting people and removing barriers to employment. Our multi-year reform plan has four objectives: to motivate and support people to be successful in the workforce; to provide more adequate assistance; to deliver modern, responsive services; and ensure public confidence in the system. We are making progress on harmonizing the rules and benefits. We are making practical improvements to benefit clients-

Interjection: We've come a long way.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —like testing peer mentors to help clients achieve their employment goals. Indeed, Minister, we have come a long way.

Social assistance affects almost 900,000 people every day. Reform is taking time. We are doing it right by consulting with the people.

#### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last November, the members of this House unanimously passed my private member's resolution to set up an all-party committee to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario. We are now into the spring session and over four months of no action from your government. Minister, will you agree to honour the wish of this House so this committee can be set up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Interiection.

Hon. John Milloy: Okay, I'll take it. Oh, I guess I can't.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You cannot. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen Murray: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It's interesting. The fact of the matter is that the honourable member is talking about a process question. The fact is that our government has been very proud of its record of activity when it comes to northern Ontario, when it comes to rural areas, when it comes to the subject areas that he puts forward, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we necessarily need another committee in order to take the type of action which I know that the Minister of Transportation has taken and is going to take over the coming months as we deal with these transportation issues throughout these areas throughout the province. We don't need another committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Sadly, Mr. Speaker, that's the typical answer that we get when we talk about rural Ontario.

Again, back to the Minister of Transportation. Hopefully, he'll pay more attention and give me a good answer this time. Minister, you know that presently in rural and northern Ontario, public transportation is essentially nonexistent. You have heard through me and through rural and northern residents, as well as anti-poverty groups including the United Way, how critical it is that we action this transportation study.

Following the cutbacks by Via Rail and Greyhound bus services and your government's divestiture of Ontario Northland, as many as two million people in some 390 communities north of the GTA today can't readily access transportation to get to work, to doctors' appointments or to visit family and friends.

Again, Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you set up this all-party committee immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Acting Premier. Hon. John Milloy: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to try and get my head around what the member is trying to suggest here, because when his party was in power, the last few years they were in power, they spent \$1.4 billion on infrastructure, which was an all-time low. Today, we're spending \$14 billion a year on infrastructure. We are spending \$10 in rural Ontario for infrastructure for every \$1 the Conservatives spent. So this party that's supposed to be prorural spent 10 cents for every dollar we spend on rural infrastructure.

The reason the honourable member has so many problems is because his party in power did what his federal party continues to do: cancel Via, cut back service, cancel projects, and that's why we have a problem. We don't need a committee; we need to keep spending the way we are and investing in rural Ontario.

#### POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Liberal government has denied knowing anything about the police investigation. But today, in the justice committee, our witness, Detective Constable Duval from the anti-rackets branch of the OPP, indicated that the OPP was interviewing current political staff in this building and during business hours.

How is it possible that the government had no inkling of what was happening while police were roaming the

halls and conducting interviews of these people?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I suggest that after question period, the honourable member may want to go to the Globe and Mail website and read the headline of their coverage of what Inspector Duval said today and the conclusion they reached: that in fact none of this activity occurred under the current Premier.

He may also want to take a lesson from Inspector Duval when he warned legislators that their job is not to interfere in police investigations. It may even hamper it.

What's interesting is that the member from Vaughan asked a number of questions of the inspector. The first set of questions involved the scurrilous allegations that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition, if they were true or supported by the ITO. Inspector Duval gave a very simple answer: "No."

Then the member from Vaughan said, "I notice in reviewing the ITO and looking at the list of names that in

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I trust the discretion of Detective Constable Duval in answering the questions that he thought were appropriate, and I ask the Acting Premier to answer this next question.

There were OPP investigators at Queen's Park over the course of weeks. There were around half a dozen visits and at least 14 interviews conducted in this building, but somehow the government claims that they knew nothing about this investigation until last week.

Does the Acting Premier understand why Ontarians would have a difficult time understanding this or accept-

ing this?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I think it has been a matter of public record that the OPP have been investigating for some time.

What happened last Thursday is that some documents were made public by the court. In them were some accusations, very serious accusations, against a former chief of staff to the former Premier, and at that time, the Premier indicated that that's the first she had learned of them; I think for most Ontarians it was the first that they had learned of them.

But, again, let me go back to the exchange with Inspector Duval and the member from Vaughan: "So to be clear, if an individual's name is listed in this ITO, does that necessarily mean they have committed a crime or they have actually engaged in any wrongdoing?" "No."

Then the member from Vaughan said, "I noticed in reviewing the ITO and looking at the list of names that, in fact, even members of the PC caucus and the NDP caucus are listed in the ITO. Just out of curiosity, why are the names in the ITO?" The inspector answered, "Some of them were witnesses for this police investigation."

The fact is, the police have undertaken their work, and as Inspector Duval cautioned, we should allow them to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

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#### SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi, the Honourable Eric Hoskins. Unlike my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, I actually don't mind the quiet.

My question concerns our government's commitment to become North America's leading jurisdiction for social enterprises, to encourage businesses to have a positive social, cultural and environmental impact while, of course, generating revenue. That is our positive plan to create jobs and grow our economy.

In September, Ontario launched its social enterprise strategy, a comprehensive plan to grow the sector, which already represents 10,000 social enterprises across the province, 68% of which have a focus on poverty reduction. We are creating the conditions for businesses to thrive in a socially conscious way, especially important in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

My question is this: Can the minister please inform the House about our accomplishments in social enterprise?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Social enterprises, as the member just said, are businesses and not-for-profits that have positive social, environmental and cultural impacts. Ontario is already a leading jurisdiction in social enterprise, but our goal is to make Ontario the number one jurisdiction in North America for social enterprise.

We have created the Office for Social Enterprise in my ministry to support this initiative. As part of our strategy, the government has launched a \$4-million social enterprise demonstration fund that builds the capacity of

our early-stage high-growth social enterprises.

We also are working to connect social enterprises with global investors. It will be a \$1-trillion market globally within the decade. We want our social enterprises to be able to tap into that market, so we partnered with Social Capital Markets, with MaRS and with the Royal Bank of Canada to host an international social finance conference just last month here in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Minister, speaking doctor to doctor, I appreciate your overview. I know my community of Etobicoke North will be pleased to hear that our government has been active in connecting investors and social enterpreneurs, especially since many social enterprises hire youth and other vulnerable communities. My own riding, like many members in this House, having a large youth population, I have many conversations with constituents about the strides that we are making for their jobs and social enterprise strategies.

I believe it's important that we have taken the initiative to establish an office to coordinate social enterprise activities across government. This, of course, will stream-

line the process.

My question is this: What are the other supports that we have developed to help the social enterprise sector

develop and thrive in this globalized economy?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We have also supported the establishment and launch of the Social Venture Connection, an exchange which is the first North American social finance platform that connects impact investors with investment-ready social enterprises. We have also announced we are moving forward with social impact bonds.

But I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to acknowledge again Tim Jones, the CEO of Artscape, a great social enterprise here in Toronto that strengthens arts and culture. Tim was recently awarded a very prestigious international honour from the Schwab Foundation and has been named Social Entrepreneur of the Year. Congratulations, Tim. He's just an example of one of the many talented social entrepreneurs and social enterprises here in this province that we are working hard to support.

#### RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. With cottage leases set to expire at the end of 2017, the Rondeau Cottagers Association has

fought to keep the 120-year-old community intact. You have been co-operative, as have previous MNR ministers. The cottagers were relieved when you told them that there was no appetite to throw them out.

However, a letter to the cottagers dated March 25 from assistant deputy minister Tracey Mill stated that it is the ministry's goal to "restore and rehabilitate the park to its natural state. This will continue to be the goal of the ministry for the years ahead."

Minister, cottagers are rightly concerned that her statement means that the cottages are doomed for demolition. These are mixed messages. Minister, my question is: Is the removal of the cottages within Rondeau imminent and, if so, will you make the final—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The member opposite knows full well that we have been working together on this. Senior staff from my office met with him on February 12 of this year to discuss this issue.

I don't believe the messages are incompatible in the sense that we're doing everything that we can to ensure that the ecological integrity of the park is maintained. As the member opposite knows, there's a high number of endangered species in this park area. This is the last area of Carolinian forest in the province, contained within this park, and there are 285 cottage leases in this park, as well, that have been extended over 21-year periods of time for a number of years.

We need to get this right. As the member knows, we are committed to working with him and the cottagers to find a solution moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The 420-foot dock at Rondeau Provincial Park was extensively damaged by ice over this harsh winter. A local petition to save it has gathered over 1,000 signatures online, and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have added their support for the repair of the pier. The Rondeau Cottagers Association is even open to negotiations to help pay for the repairs.

This pier was used for swimming, fishing, walking, and even enjoyed by many residents in my community and tourists—for decades. The "big dock," as it's called, is unique to Rondeau and a main attraction.

Respectfully, Minister, in the words of the anglers in my riding: "Are we going to fish or continue to cut bait?" Can you say today that the historical structure will not be removed from the park, and repaired this year?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, thanks to the member for the question. One of the challenges with respect to this park, as the member knows full well, is that cottagers in the park have benefited from payment in lieu by the ministry, which has totalled almost \$900,000 a year in taxes being paid to the community of Chatham-Kent in lieu of taxes that probably should have been paid by cottagers.

The ministry is under incredible pressure with respect to these types of infrastructure investments. We have these types of needs all across the province, and we want to prioritize and use our resources as best as possible to remediate and improve these types of infrastructure projects.

Again, we're committed to working with the member, and I look forward to a solution moving forward. As the member also knows, there were environmental and economic studies that were supposed to be done. They are nearing completion. We should be able to release those in the next several weeks, and we'll have more to say about that. I look forward to working with the member.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** My question is to the Acting Premier. Does the Acting Premier think that the people of Ontario should be paying for partisan ads that promote the governing party instead of the public interest?

Hon. John Milloy: Absolutely not, which is why when we came to power we were so offended. One of the first things that we did was to undo the practice of the former Progressive Conservative Party, which used tax-payers' money. I remember, as an Ontarian, being disgusted by the countless flyers of a partisan nature that I was receiving in my mailbox, which were put forward by the government and paid for with taxpayers' money but were in fact promoting the Progressive Conservative Party.

That's why, when we came to power, we passed legislation—in 2004, I believe it was—to make sure that in those three key areas of radio and TV, newspapers and billboards—that those ads would be looked at by the Auditor General to make sure that they serve the appropriate purpose that they were put out for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** To the Acting Premier: That legislation has got loopholes so big, you can drive a train through the darned things.

I ask you again: We know that in the last three months you spent \$30 million in partisan ads put forward by the government and by the broader public sector, and you continue doing it. I'm going to ask you the question once again: Are you prepared to close those loopholes, in order to stop those agencies from spending money that could, quite frankly, be used for better things?

Hon. John Milloy: I think we have to be careful here. We brought in a new regime when it comes to advertising, quite frankly disgusted with what had gone on under the previous government. We expect all taxpayerfunded advertising to apply to that regime or to adhere to that regime. At the same time, we asked the Auditor General to focus on those three key areas: radio and TV, newspapers and billboards, and to ensure and provide that double-check, that double peace of mind, that in fact these ads are appropriate.

There is nothing wrong with government advertising. They talk about valuable government services. But the fact of the matter is, we have brought in a regime that I am very proud of, particularly in the face of what we saw in the province of Ontario for eight very long years.

# ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. According to the 2011 census, almost a quarter of First Nations people in Canada live in Ontario, more than in any other province. Some 80% of the aboriginal population in Ontario lives off-reserve, with 62% residing in urban centres.

My riding of Scarborough–Guildwood has one of the highest off-reserve aboriginal populations in the province. The population is young and growing, with 36% comprised of youth aged 19 and under, compared with 25% for non-aboriginal, and a historic growth rate of 32%.

I know aboriginal people living in urban areas face unique challenges like higher unemployment rates, lower health status and a lower rate of high school graduation than non-aboriginal. Approximately 37,000 aboriginal people are living in Toronto alone, with large populations in Ottawa, Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

Can the minister tell us how government is working to improve and deliver services to aboriginal people living in urban centres?

Hon. David Zimmer: Just this past Monday, I was pleased to announce, along with the Minister of Infrastructure and the Ministers of Health and Culture, that the province is transferring a section of land on the site of the Pan/Parapan Am Games athletes' village to Anishnawbe Health Toronto. A world-class health care and dynamic aboriginal community and cultural centre will be built here following the games.

I'm very excited to share that my ministry and I will be taking on the responsibility of acting as the lead facilitator in this important initiative. We will work directly with Anishnawbe Health to bring together appropriate aboriginal partners so the hub meets the diverse needs of the aboriginal people. This hub will serve as a place for learning and innovation and for sharing traditional and modern culture and knowledge. It can provide a variety of services. We are working for a space where the aboriginal community can gather in this great city. The aboriginal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear such good news. This really points to the whole government approach Ontario is taking to support the aboriginal community. Projects like this are the building blocks to a relationship built on trust and mutual respect with urban aboriginal peoples in Ontario.

We know that a constructive, co-operative relationship with aboriginal peoples in Ontario leads to improved opportunities and a better future not only for aboriginal people but for all people living in Ontario.

Given the landmark nature of this announcement, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister

expand upon the land to be transferred? When will the community health centre and aboriginal hub be built?

Hon. David Zimmer: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I want to thank my friend from Scarborough–Guildwood, who I know shares a great passion for the culture of indigenous people.

We're very excited about this. This is 2.4 acres of land. It has been legally transferred. It's in the ownership now of the Anishnawbe health foundation, which is working through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and with other urban aboriginal groups and partners to see the development of this site as a legacy project after the Pan Am Games. So construction will start.

What's going on now is that Douglas Cardinal is the architect they've selected for the project, and the planning will be going ahead for comprehensive cultural, performing, visual arts and employment entrepreneurship, as well as wellness and the practice of traditional medicine. We think this will be transformative to the future of aboriginal people.

I want to thank the Minister of Health and the minister of heritage and culture, and my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, for their leadership on this.

#### TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, it's your job to ensure that law and order is maintained in Ontario, but you are failing to do that when it comes to cracking down on contraband tobacco. Promises like increased fines are meaningless if you don't give the OPP and municipal police forces the authority and resources to stop illegal cigarettes from reaching the streets. As you stand idly by, hundreds of millions in tax revenue go up in smoke, and the livelihood of about 75,000 Ontarians in the convenience store sector is threatened.

Can you tell me exactly what enforcement tools and resources you have given police to butt out illegal contraband tobacco?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite, as the critic to my ministry, for asking a very important question. I also very much look forward to working with both the critics, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from London West, on important issues around community safety.

These are very important issues. Obviously, I am getting briefed on them one by one to have a better understanding as to how we ensure that, on issues like contraband tobacco, we are as effective working in partnership with other police services, working in partnership with the RCMP so that we curtail the import of contraband and the use of contraband tobacco in our province.

I look forward to the ideas from the member opposite in that regard because I think, frankly speaking, it is a shared responsibility for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Almost every speaker on Monday, when we debated your Bill 131, mentioned that the government is lacking on the illegal tobacco trade.

When you look at the issues in the province, you have essentially done nothing. The latest Ontario Convenience Stores Association's study shows that I'm right. Your failure to give police the tools they need means illegal cigarettes now comprise nearly half of the market in some locations.

More than 70 municipalities have passed resolutions asking you to get illegal smokes off their streets. Jurisdictions like Quebec prove that if police have the power to enforce, revenue goes up, and the supply of contraband tobacco goes down.

But it starts with you doing your job and putting hard-working Ontarians ahead of criminals. When are you going to do your job? When are you going to crack down on illegal cigarettes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I have full confidence, and the government has full confidence, in the job that the OPP and other, local police services do when it comes to cracking down on illegal tobacco. There is a very robust relationship between the OPP, the RCMP and other police services from other provinces and municipal services in making sure that we are taking concrete steps in illegal activities around contraband tobacco.

If you look at the results, since 2008, for example, more than 223 million illegal cigarettes, 2.5 million untaxed cigars and 74 million grams of untaxed fine-cut or other tobacco products have been seized by Ministry of Finance investigators and inspectors. There is a lot of work that is already being done among police services on a complicated scheme, in fact, that is employed.

We have full confidence in our police, in the RCMP and other municipal services, that they will continue to do the work and make sure illegal tobacco is controlled in our province.

#### ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last summer, the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs promised to reform the Ontario Municipal Board. But the government's review says that this "consultation will not discuss or consider ... eliminating or changing the OMB's operations, practices and procedures." The government is bowing to developers who do not want any changes to the OMB.

It is another bait and switch. People are tired of hearing this government promise one thing to communities and then deliver something else on behalf of developers.

Will the new minister do what his government has promised and review the OMB itself?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister without portfolio, please come to order.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** I want to thank the member for the question. I do understand very clearly that this particular member has expressed a specific interest in this issue for quite a period of time.

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What I can tell him is that there has been significant consultation that has been undertaken on this specific issue. If I remember correctly, the consultation began in the fall of last year and concluded in the early winter of this year, somewhere around January 2014. That consultation has been completed. The detail is within the ministry.

Within a shorter period of time, I would hope, I've asked ministry staff for information back on this piece. They have the consultation. They are reviewing the materials, and at some point, I would hope in the not-too-distant future, they will get back to me with what they believe the next steps will be when it comes to this particular issue.

We in the ministry are somewhat still uncertain as to what the member's PMB would accomplish, and so we are taking this all into consideration. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future we will have something more to bring forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Consultations and the changes that you're planning mean nothing without changes to the OMB itself. The OMB will still decide whether an appeal goes forward or not.

Last year in Waterloo region, the OMB ignored the province's Places to Grow Act and approved a sprawling development 10 times bigger than what the rules allowed. The OMB does not respect official plans or even provincial statutes.

When will the government keep its promise and rein in the unelected, unaccountable and out-of-control OMB?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I go back to the original point I was trying to make. The member opposite is putting forward a position; in fact, I think it was in the media not so long ago—was Kitchener-Waterloo region where he was? He was speaking to them about his desire to see the OMB completely dissolved. When he was in Kitchener-Waterloo, he suggested to them that we should do away with the OMB, but at the same time, we need to create some other mechanism to deal with these issues.

We already have a mechanism. You disagree on what that mechanism is and whether it should continue to exist, but at the same time, you seem to be suggesting we need something.

What we are doing, as part of that land use planning consultation that was done across the province, is considering potential changes to the OMB as it is currently constructed. We will have information coming back on that in the not-too-distant future. There is a provincial interest here to be maintained. We believe in that position,

and hopefully very soon—I don't want to put a timeline on this—we will be in a position to discuss this at greater length.

#### **VOLUNTEERS**

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Six individuals from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt will be receiving an Ontario Volunteer Service Award for 25 years of service to a non-profit organization. One of these volunteers, Warren Kanagaratnam, is receiving this award for his outstanding work with the International Movement for Tamil Culture.

Volunteers, who donate their time, energy, skills and knowledge to causes close to their heart, are true leaders and heroes in our community. Ontario has a long and proud tradition of volunteerism. It is estimated that Ontarians volunteer over 860 million volunteer hours annually.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House how our province recognizes these valuable individuals through the Ontario Volunteer Services Awards?

**Hon. Michael Coteau:** I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for the question, and I look forward to joining her on April 16 at her Volunteer Service Awards in Scarborough.

This year, over 11,000 volunteers will be presented with the Ontario Volunteer Service Award; 55 ceremonies will be held across this great province from now until the end of June. I would like to remind and personally invite all members of this House to please join their local communities as we celebrate the recipients in handing out the awards across this great province.

Mr. Speaker, our province is the number one destination for newcomers. When newcomers choose our province, it is because they know how highly we place a value on fairness, equality and social justice. They know that Ontario fundamentally believes in offering a hand to someone in need. They know that we take care of our neighbours and our communities, and we take care of our vulnerable population.

Each year, six million volunteers across the province help make their communities a better place to live. The Volunteer Service Award is a unique platform to acknowledge the hard work of local volunteers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to join the minister in congratulating all the 2014 award recipients.

Speaker, I know that our government supports a number of initiatives to help to encourage and promote volunteerism in Ontario. We also know that promoting and acknowledging volunteerism is a part of our government's plan to invest in the people and organizations that enrich our communities.

I want to share one example. For almost nine years, I have seen, on a weekly basis, young people in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt volunteer in a reading pro-

gram for young children. I want to pay tribute to these young people as well as volunteers in local nursing homes and seniors' facilities.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please update the House on other Ontario honours and recognition programs?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for her question. That is correct: Our province has several programs to acknowledge the dedication of our six million volunteers here in Ontario.

In fact, I'm happy that the member has brought up a youth initiative in her local community. I'd like to remind the members that this spring, we'll be kicking off the seventh annual ChangeTheWorld youth challenge. This year's campaign has been expanded to six weeks. The official goal is 33,000 young people aged 14 to 18, and they will volunteer for at least three hours.

Additionally, this spring, one of my favourite Ontario awards will be presented: the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism. The late June Callwood committed her life to action and social justice, particularly related to vulnerable communities. In her lifetime, she founded or co-founded more than 50 different organizations.

All of the awards ceremonies mentioned today not only honour individuals, but they remind us of the value of being an active and engaged citizen here in the beautiful province of Ontario.

#### **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I look for some guidance from you on a very important point of order. It has come to my attention, Mr. Speaker, that it is your birthday this weekend, and I'm wondering if I could seek unanimous consent, on behalf of the Legislature, to wish you a happy birthday.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. That's not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought I was going to get past this one. The member from Durham would appreciate this very much. I don't want anybody to know. It doesn't matter. I appreciate it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on a point of order.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Being that we won't be sitting tomorrow, I would like to wish my colleague Jim Wilson a happy birthday tomorrow, and also my brothers Mark and Martin, tomorrow as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They say there's something special about April.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to have in the gallery today members of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Toronto: the president, Oksana Rewa—and I apologize in advance if I mangle any names—Olga Yatsetchko, Olena Wawryshyn, Michael Wawryshyn, Yuri Daschko, Yuri Weretelnyk, Emilia Stelmach, Taras Masnyi, Lesya Bablak, Denys Golemenkov, Tamara Koszarny, Marta Sporniak, Marc Marzotto, Pavlo Sugolov—all welcome to the House.

#### ANDREW "ANDY" HOUSTON

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have some sad news for the House, and that is to inform members of the passing of Andrew "Andy" Joseph Houston, who was a 15-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police. He passed away on March 30, and his funeral was today in the town of Mount Forest. Andy was an extraordinary man. He leaves his wife, Sara, and his sons Jack, Sam, and Max. I know that I speak for all members of this House in extending condolences to his family.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to speak to the failed, yet shameful, public smear campaign this government recently conducted against the member from Nipissing. The Standing Committee on Estimates this week ruled that, contrary to incorrect accusations from the government House leader, the member from Nipissing disclosed only documents that were in the "public domain," as was stated by the committee Clerk. The Chair of the committee, the member from Beaches–East York, stated that there was "no breach" of privilege. Those documents, as you will recall, detailed the \$4.5-billion fiscal gap that was deliberately kept from the public in last year's budget.

Despite the member presenting clear evidence in this House that the documents he referenced were public, the Liberals staged a disgusting display this week at committee. The personal muckraking and stall tactics exhibited as this committee tried to get a simple ruling—that's all we were trying to get, a simple ruling—was a deliberate personal attack on the member from Nipissing. This carried on even though the Liberals knew that they were wrong.

I'm pleased that the member from Nipissing has been vindicated, and our caucus will not be intimidated into backing away from our pursuit of the truth for Ontario taxpayers.

#### **EVENTS IN UKRAINE**

**Ms.** Cheri DiNovo: Today, I'm tabling a motion. It says that, in the opinion of this House, the Liquor Control

Board of Ontario should suspend the sale of Russian-made Russian Standard Vodka due to the international crisis in Ukraine. I want to make a couple of things clear. First of all, it's just one brand that is 100% made in Russia; that's Russian Standard Vodka.

Of course we know, and our friends here in the Ukrainian Canadian Congress who are all here to witness the tabling of this motion, that this is symbolic. This is symbolic, but symbols are so important, particularly where peace is concerned and particularly where the lives of Ukrainian Ontarians are concerned. There are some 350,000 Ukrainians who live in our province. They have relatives in Ukraine. Many knew people in the Maidan. Last Sunday, I was out with them in front of city hall, where 100 martyrs were honoured, 100 who had been killed by sniper fire while protesting in the Maidan.

This is a critical situation. People are concerned for their families and their loved ones. It's extremely important that we say something in this Legislature, that we do something in this Legislature, on behalf of our constituents. As a co-author, along with yourself, Mr. Speaker, of the Holodomor bill that declared that a genocide, and also as co-author of Ukrainian heritage month, I could not not speak. On behalf of our 350,000 Ukrainians, on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and on behalf of people who desire peace everywhere, I table this motion.

#### SARAH BURKE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Last Wednesday, I was pleased to learn that Highway 93, which runs through Simcoe county, will be renamed Sarah Burke Memorial Highway in honour of the freestyle skier who passed away in 2012. Sarah Burke was born in Barrie, raised in Midland and started skiing when she was five. She was a talented skier, winning four gold medals at the winter X Games in 2011, and was the first woman to land an amazing 1,080-degree spin: three full rotations. In 2012, she was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame.

Burke was also a strong advocate behind the inclusion of the half pipe and slopestyle ski events in the Olympic games. These events were finally included in the winter Olympics in Sochi this year. Burke, however, was never able to participate in the events she so strongly advocated for, as she passed away tragically in Salt Lake City, Utah, during a training accident in January 2012. At the Sochi games, her teammates took her ashes and spread them over the Olympic half pipe to honour Burke and her efforts. On that very same mountain, Canada won nine of its 25 medals.

Sarah Burke serves as a fantastic role model for young women everywhere. Her legacy will forever be remembered as not just as a freestyle skier but as an advocate for her sport. It's a great thing to hear that Highway 93 has been renamed in her honour.

#### MARY ANN FOUND AND BRENDA METCALF

Mr. John O'Toole: I today want to stand in this House and honour two women of excellence in agricul-

ture in Durham region. I'd like to congratulate Mary Ann Found and Brenda Metcalf.

Mary Ann is from Courtice and won the Women in Excellence in Agriculture Award. The award is presented by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, which recognized contributions that Mary Ann has made to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and to her local community through promotion of agriculture. She is only one of the founding members of the Durham Farm Connections. The informative Farm Connections website; Aggie, the interactive farm robot; and the touring display entitled "Why farming matters" are some of the ways that Mary Ann has brought farming and urban communities together. Mary Ann has been instrumental in helping the Durham Farm Connections program grow from an annual three-day event to adding a high school education day, and in forming an ag strategy committee to work with the agricultural community to develop plans to place agricultural education front and centre in Durham region and beyond, in Ontario.

I also wish to congratulate one of her colleagues, Brenda Metcalf, who is currently 4-H club leader with Mary Ann, a volunteer office manager, and is very active in local, regional and 4-H opportunities. A valued member of her community, she is a member of the Women's Institute and an executive member of the Baseline Community Association, the Clarington agricultural advisory council and the Farm Connections ag education committee.

These two women are leaders in my community that are feeding the cities of Ontario, and I thank them personally.

#### ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS SUBVENTIONS DU CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

**M**^{me} **France Gélinas:** I rise today to congratulate my incredibly talented constituents who recently received grants from the Ontario Arts Council.

Last year, M^{me} Suzanne Charron de Val Caron a reçu une bourse de 12 000 \$ de création littéraire pour son livre Joe LaFlamme: L'indomptable dompteur de loups, qui a vécu à Gogama. Her book is available in both French and English.

Julian Cote of Naughton received a northern arts grant for his music work.

Erik Harju from Worthington is a media artist. Erik's video "The Forest Gnome" is on YouTube. I encourage you to check it out. It is really funny.

Kenneth Lillie-Paetz of Wahnapitae is an author, artist, educator and the artist behind monkeypharmacy.com. Go on the Internet and check out what he has done.

We also have Beth Mairs of Worthington, a filmmaker and writer for BAM North Productions, an amazing production company.

Émilie O'Bonsawin de Hanmer, une musicienne, a joué à Cousin Vinny's, qui est juste à côté de mon bureau

de comté. She also drives a really cool tie-dyed Volkswagen Beetle. You have to check this out.

I am so proud of those artists. Nickel Belt is a diverse place, so I want to encourage more artists to participate in those programs and bring more arts and culture to our diverse Nickel Belt. It is always a pleasure to recognize them.

Merci.

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#### KEMPTVILLE COLLEGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: People all across eastern Ontario and in my riding were shocked by this government's announcement to close Kemptville College. For nearly a century, people in my riding have gone to Kemptville College to gain their agricultural education. The government's short-sighted announcement not only caught people off guard, but has forced many hopeful students to abruptly change their plans for this fall.

I can speak of thousands, but I will speak of two people in my riding: Olivia Howard and Suzanne Green from the Eganville area, who are going to be faced with significant difficulties as a result of your decision to close this college. It will leave them the choice of enrolling in Ridgetown, which is seven to eight hours away from home and nearly double the cost of tuition; another choice would be to go to Macdonald College in Quebec. Again, this is not an option they wish to pursue.

Kemptville College is known for its excellence in programming. It's got a great small-town atmosphere, is conveniently located for people in eastern Ontario, and almost every student there also has a family member who attended Kemptville College.

Municipalities in my riding have passed resolutions demanding that this decision be reversed. It is absolutely wrong to allow this college to close. At the very least, the government should support my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, MPP Steve Clark, and his call for a two-year moratorium, so that all local options can be considered before it's too late. The Premier has the power to do exactly that, and she knows it. It is up to her to act to keep this vital educational facility open.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I am very pleased to make an announcement on affordable housing on behalf of the residents of 2267 and 2677 Kipling Avenue in my own riding of Etobicoke North. Last month, I was joined by some federal colleagues, as well as the councillor of Ward 1, Vincent Crisanti, and the mayor of the city of Toronto, the honourable Rob Ford, to make a \$1.83-million announcement, co-funded by the federal and provincial governments, to the building's property management company—I must say, a very conscientious group of individuals—Humber Property Management.

We helped fund renovations to the roof, boiler room, flooring and finishing, kitchen, bathrooms, and six elevators in the two buildings. I must say, though, from the feedback that we received from the residents, and from being able to confer with some of the management there, as well as some of the corporate representatives, I was very pleased to deal with this excellent corporate citizen, Humber Property Management.

It is investments such as these in affordable housing that provide families with access to stable, safe and affordable homes, and I am proud to thank and be a part of a government that gets affordable housing and that

entire dossier.

Working together, we're hoping to build a more successful, compassionate, and just and united province, and announcements such as the one we made on Kipling Avenue are a part of that.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yesterday, the Minister of Finance tabled the government's long-term report on the economy. Instead of being aspirational—the Premier's latest buzzword—the document is instead a very pessimistic outlook on the next 20 years in the province of Ontario. The report projects that the Ontario economy will grow by an annual average of 2.1%, while at the same time projecting average annual inflation over the same period of exactly 2%. This means that the government believes the provincial economy in Ontario will be essentially stagnant for the next 20 years—aspirational, indeed.

At the same time, the Minister of Finance would have us believe that the government will balance the provincial budget by 2017-18. He's made this claim many times, but his claim has been thoroughly debunked by the Ministry of Finance's own documents, which the mem-

ber for Nipissing disclosed last month.

I submit that this government will never balance the provincial budget; however, I believe a successor government must, and will. When the budget is balanced, I continue to believe that the provincial government should commit itself to a long-term debt repayment plan. We need to begin to pay down the provincial debt in good years, instead of continuing to dig the hole deeper.

Two years ago I suggested that the government should create a new line item in the budget committing it to making a payment on the principal of the provincial debt of at least 2.5% of program spending of that fiscal year. As the Minister of Finance prepares his budget for this

year, I again highlight this important issue.

Over the next 20 years, let us build an Ontario economy that doesn't stagnate, but instead allows us to pay down the debt and achieve our full economic potential.

#### **BRIDGE BUILDING CONTEST**

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** This past weekend, I was invited to join the Professional Engineers Ontario, Scarborough chapter, at their annual bridge building contest. MPP Soo Wong was also there in attendance.

Professional Engineers Ontario have hosted the bridge building contest for the past 11 years, inviting hundreds of students from Scarborough-area schools to build a bridge from Popsicle sticks, a bridge that is then tested for any flaws, and those flaws are addressed. I had the opportunity to operate the testing station. Students are expected to take the advice given on the bridges from engineers and come back next year with a stronger bridge.

Students from two schools in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, Churchill Heights junior public school and George B. Little junior public school, entered the competition and performed extremely well.

I was most pleased to see how many young girls were participating in the bridge building contest. There are still so many fields of study that do not appeal to women and, unfortunately, engineering is often one of them.

I am grateful that Professional Engineers hosts this event annually, as it encourages young girls and young people in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood and all of Scarborough to consider engineering as a potential career path.

Speaker, we can look forward to them building the bridges of our future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 56, An Act to prohibit certain restrictions on the use of aggregates in performing public sector construction work / Projet de loi 56, Loi interdisant certaines restrictions frappant l'utilisation d'agrégats lors de la réalisation de travaux de construction pour le secteur public.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTMAS TREE DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ARBRE DE NOËL

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day / Projet de loi 185, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'arbre de Noël.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim Wilson: If passed, this bill will designate the first Saturday in December of each year as Christmas Tree Day in Ontario. This industry brings tremendous economic and environmental benefit to our province, and for this reason, following its introduction, I'll be seeking unanimous consent for its prompt passage.

I want to thank Mr. Fred Somerville, president of the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, for the inspiration behind this bill. Mr. Somerville and Ms. Shirley Brennan, executive director of Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, are joining us here today in the members' gallery.

Mr. Speaker, as I previously made every member of this assembly aware, this legislation is not only in line with other jurisdictions, including the United States, which has deemed the entire first week of December as National Christmas Tree Week, but it also recognizes an industry that brings tremendous gain to our province by producing more than one million fresh, farm-grown Christmas trees each year and replacing those trees with new seedlings, one million seedlings each year.

In the spirit of Christmas Tree Day in Ontario, I seek unanimous consent that the orders for the second and third reading of Bill 185, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be immediately called consecutively, and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is seeking unanimous consent that the orders for the second and third reading of Bill 185, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be immediately called consecutively, and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ONTARIO'S ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU COMMISSAIRE À L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 186, An Act to amend the Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993 to establish conflict of interest guidelines for the Environmental Commissioner / Projet de loi 186, Loi visant à modifier la Charte des droits environnementaux de 1993 afin d'établir des lignes directrices sur les conflits d'intérêts pour le commissaire à l'environnement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I introduced the Accountability for Ontario's Environmental Commissioner Act. This bill, if passed, would amend the Environmental Bill of Rights to prohibit the Environmental Commissioner from becoming employed or engaging in a business or undertaking outside his or her appointment in certain circumstances.

This bill would also prohibit the Environmental Commissioner from being in a conflict of interest, as prescribed by the regulations.

#### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### STUDENT SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Hon. Liz Sandals: The health, safety and well-being of all Ontario students is a priority for our government. Over the years, we've developed a number of initiatives to help schools and boards strengthen student success and well-being. These initiatives have focused on things such as healthy eating, increased physical activity, better mental health and injury prevention. That is why I'm so pleased to support the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, better known as OPHEA, as they undertake a new initiative to review how medical conditions are managed in schools.

Our government will support OPHEA with funding of up to \$40,000 to conduct research that will serve as an important step in determining the best means of managing student medical conditions in our schools, including asthma, diabetes, anaphylaxis and epilepsy, just to name a few.

As a mother and grandmother, I know the concerns of parents. Parents want, and deserve, to know that their children can go to school each day and be safe. This is especially true in cases of an emergency related to a medical condition. In some cases, the emergency can be a matter of life and death.

Members of this Legislature have been, and continue to be, strong advocates on behalf of a variety of student medical conditions. I would also like to acknowledge that joining us in the gallery today are members of many of the associations who are strong advocates for a variety of conditions. We have, joining us from OPHEA, Tammy Shubat and Chris Markham; from Epilepsy Ontario, Rozalyn Werner-Arcé and Suzanne Moffatt; from the Canadian Diabetes Association, Christine Albee and Gabriella Simo; and from the Ontario Lung Association,

John Chenery. I'd like to thank all of these advocates for their work on past bills and past issues that we've discussed here in the House.

Since 2005, in fact, there have been a series of bills tabled in the House to address the management of student medical conditions in school settings around the province. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the member from Brant for his advocacy for students with anaphylaxis, and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for his advocacy on behalf of students who live with asthma. Of course, we all know that the member from Brant is more often referred to now as Mr. Speaker.

Our government is concerned with the high incidence of medical conditions that exist in Ontario schools. We believe that stand-alone legislation for each medical condition is not only impractical but unworkable in schools. We believe that a more comprehensive approach to the management of multiple conditions would be much better for our students and our schools. Our goal is to protect the health, safety and well-being of our students, and all schools should have a plan in place to deal with medical emergencies.

OPHEA's task will be to review current policies and procedures and to identify both best practices and any gaps. We will use OPHEA's research to plan the next steps in improving the safety of students with medical conditions. Their data will be critical to guide our government in making evidence-based and informed decisions. OPHEA has the tools and the knowledge to do this important task well.

I want to thank and acknowledge OPHEA for being the voice for healthy, active living in schools and communities by promoting quality programs and services, partnerships and advocacy.

OPHEA is also one of many partners in the education sector that support a more comprehensive approach to the management of medical conditions in schools. Other partners include the Catholic Principals' Council, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, the Ontario Principals' Council, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, and l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, among others.

This work represents the next steps toward creating a more comprehensive approach that provides the right supports in schools for children with special requirements because of medical conditions.

We are all responsible for creating safe and healthy schools. Together, we will protect the health, safety, and well-being of all students, and we will make a difference in the lives of Ontario students and families.

Thank you, Speaker.

#### PRESTO FARE CARD

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, Presto has reached a major milestone. More than one million riders

are now using their Presto cards to tap on to transit across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and in Ottawa as well.

Presto is a state-of-the-art payment system that allows riders to pay their fare and travel seamlessly and conveniently across multiple transit systems with just one card. Whether you are travelling on a GO train or municipal transit, Presto makes commuting easier for families on the go.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing reliable, modern and integrated public transit in Ontario. Presto is an important part of the commitment because it makes travelling and commuting so much more convenient for people who travel across multiple municipalities to get to work, school or appointments. One million customers is proof that we are well on our way to delivering on that commitment.

Presto rollout began in 2009 with an initial 500 customers. Fast forward to today, and the service is growing rapidly. It has doubled in size over the last year alone, from approximately 500,000 cardholders last year to more than one million today. In 2013, Presto added an average of 50,000 cardholders per month. There have been more than 188 million taps, paying three quarters of a billion dollars in fares to support the transit service.

Metrolinx will implement Presto on the TTC starting this fall. That will bring in its largest group of commuters. Presto has successfully completed rollout on OC Transpo, and the number of cards in circulation across Ottawa continues to grow.

I am proud to say that Presto is now available in all 65 GO stations, about 450 GO buses, seven municipal transit systems in the GTHA, 14 TTC subway stations, and throughout OC Transpo in Ottawa.

Our government is committed to improving public transit. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$19.3 billion in public transit in Ontario, including more than \$9.1 billion in GO Transit alone.

Our investments are paying off. In 2012, we saw an increase of more than 193 million passenger trips on municipal transit systems, compared to 2003. This has removed approximately 161 million car trips off our roads.

Presto is critical to our vision of an integrated regional transportation system for the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** It is now time for responses. The member from Cambridge.

1330

#### STUDENT SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to talk about a very important initiative that the government is commencing with respect to reviewing how medical conditions are managed in our schools. I want to state at the outset that we lend our full

support to trying to come up with some idea, some mechanism, some process whereby we encourage our educational leaders to deal with these conditions.

I will note, Mr. Speaker, that you've had some experience in promoting anaphylaxis awareness. I know the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London has talked about asthma and Ryan's Law, which is a piece of legislation already in the Legislature today. Epilepsy Ontario had their lobby day recently here at Queen's Park. And I will say, with respect to diabetes, that the former member from Cambridge, Gerry Martiniuk, introduced a private member's bill that was debated in 2008 on this very topic. I would say, on the basis of our shared concern with a variety of medical conditions-I know that my friend from Haldimand-Norfolk is very interested in promoting the idea in this Legislature of dealing with issues involving epilepsy. I want to state that we do need a process. I know that our educational leaders—our principals and our teachers—need some guidance. They often find that the process is mixed for every different medical condition. If we can consolidate those ideas into one piece of legislation, it helps everybody. It helps the students stay safe and it helps our educational leaders provide the care that's necessary to keep those kids safe.

I want to state at the outset that our caucus is very favourable to the idea that we're actually going to review this, but we're looking forward to the day when we actually see some legislation on this. We've heard for years that we were going to get legislation to consolidate these medical conditions; we've yet to hear that that's going to happen. Now we're going to spend \$40,000 to actually study it. We look forward to the day we can have one piece of legislation that deals with all medical conditions so we can help our kids succeed in a thriving and nurturing environment in our schools.

#### PRESTO FARE CARD

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We're here to talk about the Presto fare card system reaching one million users. I'm sure the minister is quite pleased with this progress, but when we actually look into the history and costs of Presto, this really isn't the feel-good milestone the minister makes it seem to be. The bottom line is this: Metrolinx will end up spending over \$700 million for the development of the Presto system. Basically, the taxpayer is paying \$700 to acquire each Presto user.

The problem with this is that the government had a choice. They could have put the taxpayer first and procured an already-developed fare card system from a company with expertise in the field or they could have developed their own system. Unfortunately, they chose the latter.

In 2006, Metrolinx awarded the contract to Accenture to develop the Presto fare card system from scratch. The development of Presto has since been characterized by cost overruns, system failings and closed tendering.

The Toronto Transit Commission, in evaluating an electronic fare system for its own riders, understood the

problems with Presto and elected to take a different approach. They had a bidding process and decided to go with a product developed by Xerox. The TTC pursued this approach to the point of outlining deal specifics with Xerox

We know that Metrolinx has spent \$700 million to develop Presto, but does anybody want to know what the TTC would have had to pay in development costs under the Xerox deal? Zero dollars. In fact, the taxpayer would not have had to put any money into the implementation and operation of this system. That's because Xerox is one of several private companies that did what the private sector does: They identified a need, used their own money to develop the product to meet that need and retained all the financial risks because, by developing a superior product, they could collect revenue from the fares that their system processes. To me, that sounds like a win-win solution.

It's worth pointing out that both Philadelphia and Montreal use a Xerox electronic fare system. These jurisdictions chose it because it's cost-competitive and delivers its service with 99.9% accuracy. For these reasons, the TTC wanted to implement this system.

Unfortunately, according to some people close to the discussions, the government stepped in and made Toronto's gas tax funding transfer contingent on the adoption of Presto. The minister over there is free to stand and proudly talk about how one million people now use Presto. However, we have to ask ourselves if such a milestone is really a success for your ministry that has spent hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars to develop a system that is inferior to others already in the marketplace and then force transit authorities to adopt that system. I know that's not something I would want to take credit for.

#### STUDENT SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to congratulate the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, OPHEA, for their advocacy and for the advocacy of their partners. I think it's a good idea to invest in the work that they want to do to provide clarity with regard to these matters of acute illnesses that have to be addressed in our schools.

But I have to note that one year ago, the Healthy Kids Panel delivered a warning. They said that Ontario was at a tipping point. They took a look at the health and wellbeing of our kids, and they told the government that much more needs to be done because across our province, too many students continue to face barriers to learning. Thousands of students continue to go hungry. In fact, nearly 160,000 children accessed our food banks last year, accounting for 40% of all food bank users in our province. Nearly one in three kids is overweight, and the leading cause is the lack of access to good, nutritious food and a lack of physical activity. These are not just economic and social costs. They are lost opportunities for our kids and for our province.

The province should be moving to implement the report of the Healthy Kids Panel, but the ministry also needs to do a much better job of implementing the policies and funding it already devotes to student health. Last year, the Auditor General found that the ministry just isn't doing its job when it comes to student nutrition and activity. She found that the ministry isn't collecting the information it would need in order to know whether its policies for student health and well-being are working or not.

We can't afford to let our students down, especially in these tough economic times. Families and kids are struggling more than ever. Yesterday, the finance minister told us that the economic recovery "is not as robust as was earlier expected." He warned us that the Liberals' economic plans of corporate giveaways will lead to 20 years of slow growth. Indeed, we are at a tipping point. The ministry has a responsibility to do much better in promoting student health and well-being than it has done in recent years.

#### PRESTO FARE CARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to respond to the statement made by the Minister of Transportation. There is no doubt that the arrival of electronic fare cards to Ontario transit is long overdue. Transit systems elsewhere got rid of tokens and tickets long ago, and we are only now catching up. But it was a mistake for the government to waste money trying to reinvent the wheel with new propriety technology that Ontarians paid to develop but don't even own. The minister was offended to receive the TTCriders' Sardine Award recently, but when he forces costly provincial priorities like Presto on the TTC with no operational funding support, transit service suffers.

The Auditor General said Presto is poised to become among the most expensive systems of its type in the world. This is because the original decision to procure this system as a public-private partnership trapped us in a relationship with a private contractor that made it impossible to seek better deals when Metrolinx realized the original system would soon be obsolete. We don't know how badly Ontarians got ripped off because everything is hidden behind third party confidentiality that protects private corporations and the government but not the public.

Let's remember that the government forced the costly Presto system on the TTC but offered no operational funding support. We don't know the final costs. The then Minister of Transportation, who is now the Premier, threatened to cut the TTC's funding for Transit City if it continued to shop around for a better deal. This threat came soon after her ministry cut \$4 billion from GTA transit four years ago. These cuts inspired the Save Transit City movement and marked the beginning of four years of transit chaos in Toronto that continues to this day. We still have no idea how much it will cost to implement Presto on the TTC, which represents more than 80% of all transit trips in Toronto. We have no idea

how much the TTC will need to spend each year to operate this costly system, how much scarce operating funding will be diverted away from services, how much more crowded buses will become or how many bus routes will be cut.

#### 1340

The province used to fund 50% of the operating costs of municipal transit in Ontario, but this funding was cut by the Tories and has stayed cut with the Liberals. TTC riders are suffering from these funding cuts. The transit advocacy group TTCriders recently gave the Minister of Transportation its Sardine Award to express its frustration over uncomfortable, unreliable, infrequent or inaccessible transit service, and to demand that the province restore funding for transit operations. The minister was very offended to receive this award, but he needs to remember that when he forces—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. The time for responses is over. It is now time for petitions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you for your indulgence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You got a few extra seconds.

The member from Durham.

#### **PETITIONS**

#### PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition again today. It reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy ... for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to present this petition to one of the new pages.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands;

"Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike:

"Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

"Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors."

I'll sign this and give it to Nusaybah to be delivered to the table.

#### GREENBELT

**Ms.** Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas, despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas, despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department, Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with page Calvin.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care ... homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and there has been a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia;

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer's;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but in 2013 they have yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day adjusted for acuity level and case mix;

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard of four hours;

"(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

"(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes."

I agree with this and will sign it and pass it off to our page.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

Mme France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Mrs. Sharon Beck from Val Therese and Natalie Gaudette of Gogama, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already

have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to ... price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Mustfah to bring it to the Clerk.

#### USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'm honoured to be joined by our NDP colleague, Mr. Paul Miller of Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I think that's a sign of good things to come in the future. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months:

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I agree, I sign it and I send it to you via page Eli.

#### SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition that deals with concerns relating to seniors and people with disabilities, and their personal care. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has changed its policy on how seniors living in supportive housing are served; and

"Whereas, due to this new policy of the Ontario government, seven senior homes in York region will be closing their on-site alternative community living programs on April 1, 2014, leaving 200 long-time residents living in these homes without the on-site continuous care they have been receiving from dedicated workers that have served them for years; and

"Whereas the on-site proactive and responsive care will now be replaced by a hub-and-spoke reactive care model relying on seniors themselves initiating calls for help that will have a response time of 15 minutes, at least, because the caregiver is not on-site but in a mobile unit and because this is unacceptable for seniors and residents who have for years relied on on-site staff to assist them with medical equipment, medical assistance, personal and other unanticipated needs; and

"Whereas the closure of the on-site care service will lead to inadequate care to meet the true needs of the seniors and residents and will result in undue hardship on residents and their families:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: That the Ontario government reverse its decision that is leading to the closure of the alternative community living programs in seven seniors' and retirement homes in York region and that the government stop the transfer of on-site continuous and proactive care to a reactive call with 15 minutes' delay for care that will lower the quality of life for seniors and residents in the seven affected homes."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition in support of our seniors and people with disabilities.

#### REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official apology challenging all Ontarians 'to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else' when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres 'who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.'

"Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents 'suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care'; and

"Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents 'were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity'; and

"Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

"Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

"Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement."

Speaker, I sign my signature and give this to page Caroline.

## MINIMUM WAGE

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'll give my petition to page Jane.

# LYME DISEASE

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I affix my name in full support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

### VISITORS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to welcome Ban Abood from London West, who is here with her friends Luz Diaz and Surya Acharya. Ban is the proud mother of page Mustfah Madlol, who is an exceptional young man and is doing an exceptional job as a page for us here in the Legislative Assembly.

# PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ADVERTISING ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ DES ORGANISMES DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising / Projet de loi 134, Loi concernant la publicité des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** This bill has been something that has been long sought after by, I would say, originally every party that has been in opposition for some time.

I remember the Liberals, in opposition to the Tories, went on at great length about how they were upset, and rightfully so, that the government of the day under Mike Harris, and eventually under Mr. Eves, was spending public dollars using advertising, and some of that advertising, quite frankly, was for the betterment of the government and the ruling party. The Liberals argued back then, and correctly so, I think, that that shouldn't be allowed.

Public dollars are so scarce, especially in these days of deficit budgets, that we shouldn't be using dollars for the benefit of the governing party. The dollars really have to be used in order to do the things that are important to the people back home.

Now, I understand there has to be some advertising. Obviously, there are things we need to let the public know, and there are mechanisms of advertising that have to be in place in order to allow that to happen. But there has got to be a line drawn when it comes to how we use those dollars and when we use those dollars.

What's clear is, the government that says they fixed this by bringing in legislation some time ago, we find out, actually hasn't fixed it, because there are a number of loopholes with the current legislation that quite frankly allow a Mack truck or a big train—if we had an ONR train—to drive through the gaps within the legislation.

Let me just explain a few of them. One is an egregious part of the existing legislation: There is no mechanism for the auditor of this province to take a look at dollars that are spent for advertising vis-à-vis the Web. There is an ability to take a look at billboards, there's a possibility to take a look at print media and electronic media, but there is no ability for the auditor to take a look at how the government spends money when it comes to the Web.

We know a lot of that happens, and when you look at some of these advertisements—and I have a number of them, Mr. Speaker, but if I lifted them up in the House like this, you would say I'm using a prop, so I won't do that.

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But if you look at a lot of the government advertising that's on the Web, much of it is designed in such a way that it gives you the sense this is a piece of Liberal advertising, sometimes by way of the styling of the letters, sometimes by way of the colour combination or both. It's pretty clear that what the government is trying to do is to use this government advertising as a way of showcasing themselves as the governing party so that the reader of the ad would say, "Oh, my God, maybe I should vote for these guys."

I understand: Every political party will do advertising. But we do that out of our political budgets, not the money that the public gives as taxpayers to the province of Ontario. We do that by way of money that we raise within our political parties in order to do advertising either at the constituency level or at the provincial level. That's fair, because that's what elections are about. You need to present your argument, and advertisement is one of the ways of being able to do that. But clearly, the money being used is money that is used by political parties; it's not taxpayers' dollars.

In this case, what we have is the government using a fair amount of money, and some of it is pretty questionable as to, "Is it really about trying to explain a government program or service, or is it really about the government trying to congratulate itself so that people look at that in a partisan way?" We see as we get closer and closer to elections, that there is a larger largesse when it comes to the government's use of government advertising. You'll note that this morning, Christina Blizzard, in her column—

**Hon. David Zimmer:** She said nice things about the Premier.

### Mr. Gilles Bisson: Of course.

In Christina Blizzard's article this morning, she was quite right that the government has been ramping up and spending when it comes to advertising in the later parts of their mandate. In this particular case, they're up to about \$30 million over the last little while of government advertising.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, what \$30 million can do in a lot of communities. There are salt trucks that need salt, as I'm finding out, in our particular riding, where I've just been notified by the media that the contractors aren't dropping salt on the highways in freezing rain. I don't know if this is true. This is all I'm being told: that in fact it's because they don't have any more salt. Well, if the contract doesn't allow for salt, maybe some of that \$30 million can go towards buying salt so somebody doesn't get in an accident on Highway 11—or whatever highway it may be-up in northeastern Ontario. There are a lot of services that we can provide to people back home with that \$30 million. At a time where we're struggling to manage with an almost \$12-billion deficit, should we be spending that much money on frivolous advertising that could be better used to put towards lowering our deficit and eventually eliminating it and/or towards services that the people back home need?

There was another wonderful—not a wonderful example, a bad example, of government advertising when it came to what happened with Metrolinx, Metrolinx, an agency of the government, was spending a fair amount of money advertising during the playoff games in the NFL. You ask yourself, why does Metrolinx need to advertise in the middle of the NFL playoffs as a way of being able to do whatever they're trying to communicate with the people of Ontario? It was strictly advertising in order to push their brand. It's not as if people in Ontario have another choice but Metrolinx when it comes to the type of transportation they want in public sector transportation. Clearly, you've got agencies, such as Metrolinx and others, who have spent a fair amount of money on advertising when, quite frankly, that money could have been better used than spending the money they did during those particular NFL playoff games.

The bill is a fairly straight-up bill. All it says is that if a broader public sector organization, be it the Canadian Mental Health Association, children's aid societies, any agency that receives money from the province of Ontario, the province of Ontario themselves—that the ad would have to go before the auditor, and the auditor would have seven days in order to say that it is an ad that is approved or not. It's not as if it's going to slow anything down. There would be a seven-day period in order to give the auditor an opportunity for her and her staff or somebody on the staff to look at this and say, "Okay, clearly, this is something that is of public interest. You can go ahead and use the advertising," or say, "No, this is clearly a government trying to take advantage of public dollars in order to promote themselves rather than the services of the province of Ontario." That's one of the things that the bill does. It's fairly straightforward and fairly simple to give the auditor the opportunity to say yea or nay on that type of advertising—but also to extend the powers of the auditor so that the auditor is able to go and take a look at some of the advertising that they're not able to do now.

Certainly in the case of the Internet, there's an inability on the part of the auditor to look at the expenditures within certain agencies, and there's also an inability for them to look at money that has been spent vis-à-vis the Internet when it comes to advertising. Clearly, this is a gap that we've got to be able to fix. We need to give the auditor the ability to look at that because, as I said, in a time of \$12-billion deficits, we need to be very frugal with our money, and we've got to do everything we can to make sure we're not wasting money on things that are not necessary. If we're spending money in that way—and sometimes it doesn't have to be a heck of a lot—it really sends a bad message to the public.

I use as an example what happened in the last civic election here in Toronto. The then candidate Rob Ford argued that he was going to take away free coffee at the council chambers in Toronto city council as a way of cutting pork, and everybody understood that. My point is, he brought it down to a very simple—you know, something they can understand. When you go to work in the morning, nobody buys your coffee. So why should the

city pay the coffee for the councillors at their meetings? It's a bit of a silly issue, but the point I'm making is this: The public understood it. If the government is spending money, be it a million dollars, \$10 million or \$100 million, on things that are not necessary, we need to make sure that in fact we don't do that and we use our money in places that it's more needed.

Just in the last couple of minutes I've got, I want to pick up on one other part about the particular bill. It seems to me that it's a reasonable step in being able to give the auditor the power that she needs for her and her office to make sure that in fact they can review advertising before it goes out the door, so that it's clearly not partisan advertising but it's advertising news in the way of promoting a government service, much in the same way that we as members, when we use our global budgets, which is the budget we use to operate our constituencies, cannot advertise in any way a partisan message.

We have people here in the civil service of Ontario at the finance branch who review this stuff. If you do a radio ad, a newspaper ad or even an Internet ad or whatever it might be, and you in any way try to show it as being any kind of partisanship, they just don't pay for it. It's as simple as that. Sometimes it's as simple as an error made by the radio station. I had a case about a year ago or two years ago where a radio station was doing an ad for Remembrance Day and, for some reason, the radio ad—I never caught it—said, "Brought to you by Gilles Bisson, NDP member for Timmins—James Bay." Well, they didn't pay for it, and rightfully so. My riding association should pay for that because it said "NDP." So I paid it out of my riding association account and did not submit it to the Legislature, and rightfully so.

What the auditor would be able to do is that type of action, making sure that the government, who is the only one that controls the government advertising budget because it is the government executive that does that, would have a restriction, essentially having the same kinds of rules that all members of this Legislature now have when it comes to not being able to do partisan advertising using government dollars.

Again the last point, and I think this is something we can all agree on: There's a loophole currently within the legislation when it comes to advertising on the Internet. We need to make sure that the auditor has the ability and the power to take a look at agencies and how they're using their public dollars when it comes to advertising on the Internet.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you. I just want to end on a bit of a personal note in the last few seconds that I have. I want to thank all the members who have come to me, over the last couple of days since I've been back, on the passing of my sister, and I just want to say that myself and my family greatly appreciate the support that staff and members here of the assembly have given me. I've just got to say that I'm very touched by the support. If you would have known Louise the way I did, she was one hell of a good woman. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

**Ms. Dipika Damerla:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising. I just wanted to start off by saying that what Mr. Bisson is proposing is essentially expanding what we already have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I remind the member we stick to ridings, not names.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't mind, Mr. Speaker. She can call me Mr. Bisson any time she wants.

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Ms. Dipika Damerla: The MPP for Timmins-James Bay. In a nutshell, what he's doing is this: What is already in place for the government, he would like to extend to the broader public services. I have to say that as a Liberal, in principle I do agree with that, because we are the party that in the first place, one of the first things we did—it's one thing to ask in opposition and say in opposition that government should not be spending money in partisan ways; it's quite another thing to be in government and do that. I'm so proud, as a Liberal, that one of the first acts of this government was to bring in this bill that put the Auditor General in charge of approving any kind of advertising by the government to ensure that it was not politically motivated. It was the right thing to do. It may not always be in the interest of the governing party in terms of partisan stuff to do, but it's the right thing to do for Ontarians. It's the right thing to do for Ontario's taxpayers.

Extending that to the broader public service, again, in principle I agree, because we have consistently been the government standing up for transparency and for what's right for this province. But I do have a couple of questions; one is that one of the reasons it was important to rein in governments when they advertise is because governments in a democracy are politically motivated, but the broader public service is not. The CEO of a broader public service does not stand for elections in the sense of a general election. So their motivation to use partisan

advertising isn't there.

While I understand what's motivating the member to bring this idea forward, I think one does have to factor in the costs associated with it. Given that there isn't that motive to advertise on a partisan basis, is this really again, like I said, it's not the principle or the spirit that I'm objecting to; I'm just asking. It would be a considerable cost to the Auditor General to have to approve every last advertising by a university, a hospital or any of them in the broader public service. Is there really a need for that in that detailed sense when you consider the costs associated, given that they don't have the political motivation that government would have in any democracy? That's the only criticism that I would have. It's always in the details. One can agree with something in principle, but it is in the details that these things need to be worked Out

I would certainly support this going to committee, because perhaps we can look in committee and see. This

is very broad and very sweeping—anything that comes under the broader public service, every last ad, very identical to the government of Ontario, exactly the same parameters. Perhaps there is room to scope it down so that we still get the end result, which is transparency and making sure that if there's any advertising done it's not self-serving but in the interests of the average Ontarian. That said, we also count the dollars and cents that this would cost to actually implement.

The only other thing I very, very quickly want to do is recap the original bill, because, you know, they say that imitation is the best form of flattery. The fact that the member is essentially just word for word extending the old Bill 25 to his bill—I just wanted to recap some of the positives of the original bill that the Liberal government

brought forward.

It came into effect on January 30, 2006. As of that date, ministries were prohibited from using items that the auditor has not reviewed and approved. It does make some exceptions. For instance, items are not reviewable under the act when notices are required to be given by law—urgent information affecting public health or safety, job notices for specific positions and information about the provision of goods or services to government. That would be RFPs etc.

The act also requires the Auditor General to review any submitted item and compare it to the following legislated standards. So any ad that does come forward from the government would have to prove that it is a "reasonable means of achieving one or more of the following purposes:

"i. To inform the public of current or proposed government policies, programs or services available to them.

"ii. To inform the public of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

"iii. To encourage or discourage specific social behaviour, in the public interest.

"iv. To promote Ontario or any part of Ontario as a good place to live, work, invest, study or visit or to promote any economic activity or sector of Ontario's economy."

So once again, I'm going to recap: In principle, I support Mr. Bisson's—sorry, the member from Timmins—James Bay. I support his bill. I would like to see it go to committee and then see if we can perhaps look at making it a better bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my privilege to join the debate over Bill 134, the Broader Public Sector Advertising Act. This bill can be thought of as the twin of 2004's Government Advertising Act, which is of course the law that is intended to prevent the government from spending public money on commercial messaging that serves partisan ends.

What the 2004 bill required of government, Bill 134 would require of many, if not most, organizations in the broader public sector. Put the bills side by side and the language of the two bills is almost exactly identical. Bill

134 would give the Auditor General the mandate to review specific types of advertising by broader public sector organizations. This would include all hospitals; school boards; universities; colleges; children's aid societies; community care access centres; agencies, boards and commissions; any publicly funded organization that received public funds of \$10 million in the previous fiscal year, as well as Hydro One, OPG and their subsidiaries.

That is obviously a very large pool of organizations that would be obligated to submit advertising to the Auditor General. More importantly, many of these organizations are more inclined to advertise than general government, which generally speaking has a lower need to generate public awareness. These organizations would be prohibited from publishing, displaying, broadcasting, or distributing the submitted ad until they receive notice that it has been approved. If, for some reason, approval does not come within seven days of submission, the permission is deemed to have been given.

To give you an idea of what kind of bureaucracy this kind of legislation entails, in the Auditor General's last annual report, the 572 individual advertising items were submitted for review in 130 submissions. The auditor's office averaged 3.1 days turnaround time. This time to render a verdict varies. The office reportedly averages

3.5 days per submission.

Last year, no government ads submitted to the Auditor General were found to be in violation of the Government Advertising Act. Of course, this is small print here. Three ministries ran ads without abiding by the act, with ads run by the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care found to be in violation of the act after the fact. These kinds of end runs are reported every year. But despite that, the Auditor General has had generally favourable things to say about the 2004 legislation.

It is not without its shortcomings, however. It didn't anticipate the prominence of websites, online advertising or social media. It doesn't formally address advertising in event programs. It is quiet on the matter of third party advertising paid for using public money. It doesn't formally mention payment in kind. Instead, these matters are all covered by informal understandings between government offices and the auditor. Yet despite this chumminess, the Liberal government has in recent years moved to weaken the 2004 legislation by narrowing the definition of what is actually partisan. Heeding the objections of the Ombudsman, the government wisely dropped those plans.

None of these shortcomings are addressed in Bill 134. Nor does Bill 134 seek to improve the power of the 2004 act. Instead, it promises to create an ocean of red tape that would surely swamp the Auditor General's office with an endless job queue and distract that office from doing the work that provides such a great service to the public.

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Rather than making existing legislation stronger and more transparent, rather than debating legislation and policies that will put our economy back to work, we're debating legislation that is, as I said earlier, tightly modelled on the 2004 act. It contains most of the same oversights, it offers no solutions, and in fact it has the very real potential to create considerable problems while diverting the energy of the Auditor General from critical reviews that yield many more benefits.

I'm sorry, Speaker, but I cannot support this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising. The bill is being introduced by my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay. It is in keeping with New Democrats putting forward ideas that give greater clarity and transparency to how we spend money in this province.

Speaker, as you know, government ads have to be vetted by the Auditor General. This is set out in legislation. It requires that a ministry, Cabinet Office or the Office of the Premier must submit their advertisements to the Office of the Auditor General for review. The government office is then prohibited from publishing, displaying or broadcasting the ad before the head of that office receives notice from the Auditor General that the ad is acceptable to certain standards.

But advertisements for government agencies, those "broader public sector" entities such as Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, Infrastructure Ontario or Metrolinx, don't require the same scrutiny as government ads. Therefore, no one is overseeing whether these ads are neutral, whether they're appropriate and whether they're non-partisan. No one is reviewing the possible political motives attached to these ads.

This bill, Bill 134, would change all of that. This bill specifies which advertisements, printed matter and other classes of messages must be reviewed. It outlines required standards that the ads must meet for these broader-sector entities—no more free-for-all.

Ads paid for by taxpayers should not be promoting the political motives of government parties, no matter if they're Liberal, PC or NDP. It's time to ensure that taxpayers are getting the best bang for their buck.

Speaker, let me quickly tell you about a recent ad campaign by the government agency Metrolinx. I think we're all familiar with it in the House. I know the NDP spoke out very publicly against it, even asking the provincial auditor to probe such spending.

My friend Keith Leslie works for the Canadian Press. He wrote a story on the 21st of January featuring my colleague the MPP from Parkdale–High Park. Ms. DiNovo was watching a Sunday NFL conference championship game with her husband and was blown away when she saw advertising for Metrolinx during the game.

Metrolinx, for those of you tuning in today from outside the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, is the provincial crown agency trusted to provide transportation in the GTHA.

We all know that transportation is a touchy subject around Toronto, what with all the fights and squabbles over subway extensions, light rapid transit, streetcars and gridlock, and we know that there never seems to be enough money to fund all of the improvements that are requested. And we know already that transit will be a key plank in the next election campaign.

So why, the MPP from Parkdale–High Park was asking, are these Metrolinx ads on TV? What did Metrolinx hope to accomplish? Here is one of her quotes: "These are precious dollars ... Are they selling Liberal politics? If not, what is it that they're selling?"

Speaker, let me tell you something. This story was so weird and unusual that it was carried verbatim in the Winnipeg Free Press, and Metrolinx means nothing to voters in Manitoba. It was picked up by the Harbour City Star in BC, the Nanaimo Daily News and even Global-Post, which bills itself as "America's world news site." Those are just some of the places where eyebrows were raised by this story.

In fact, the ads cost Metrolinx \$237,000, money that could have been used for transit instead of feeding some egos at Metrolinx or, indeed, money for a soft-sell, arm's-length promotional ad for the Liberal government and its transportation priorities.

Metrolinx, according to the Toronto Sun last August, spent nearly \$11 million on self-promotion and building its brand. Here's an agency that gets money from the taxpayer to provide transit, and they promote their brand at a cost of nearly \$11 million. It's not like they have much in the way of competition. I agree with my colleague from Parkdale–High Park: People want their transit money spent on transportation, not on glitzy ad campaigns. It's a basic principle; it's taxpayers' money.

Speaker, as you know, in politics, perception can become reality. There's a perception out there that Metrolinx advertising is a subtle—or maybe not so subtle—way of promoting a Liberal government agenda. Let's end that perception now, before we're stuck with that reality. Adopt this bill, and give the Auditor General the power to approve proposed advertising from Metrolinx, Hydro One, Infrastructure Ontario and all the other crown agencies. Take the politics out of the equation.

Thank you, Speaker, and kudos to the member for Timmins–James Bay for bringing forward such a great bill and shining a bright light on such a dark aspect of warped government spending priorities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: At the outset, I would like to begin by offering, as well, on behalf of the government side, as I did, I think, personally, with the member from Timmins–James Bay, our sympathies, prayers and condolences for the recent family tragedy that he experienced.

With that, I would also like to say that I will, I think, broadly support Bill 134, the private member's bill brought forward by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay. It's largely in agreement with our own initiatives from the Ministry of Government Services, which I remind every one of you in the House is headed by a

remarkably agile minister who, by the way, holds a doctorate in philosophy in NATO Cold War Studies—probably an ideal qualification for being House leader here.

Interjection.

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** A very able parliamentary assistant; I agree with you, Minister.

I would just remind folks why this bill—the initial incarnation of this bill—actually came forward. That was courtesy of the almost half a billion dollars—our colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh is talking about a \$300,000 expenditure with Metrolinx. Half a billion dollars over that eight-year mandate of those lost Harris-Eves years was spent on what can only be described as blatant self-promotional advertising, to the point where not only was it your tax dollars at work bearing the previous Premier Mike Harris's signature, but we're also talking video testimonials.

One personal beef I have, as a physician: The universal colour of anything to do with health care is red, as in the Red Cross, red blood and so on. We were probably the only jurisdiction to have—suddenly our ambulances were turned blue. I invite you to investigate that particular aspect.

We are, as I say, member from Timmins–James Bay, the honourable Gilles Bisson, largely in agreement with your bill. I think we're probably going to support it and vote it into committee for some adjustments and finetuning. But I would like to say that your bill probably paints with too broad a brush stroke. Some of that was highlighted by my other colleagues here, and was cited by the Conservative side as well.

I'll give you an example. You're looking at having the Auditor General regulate, I think, what is probably more than almost 700 different agencies and their advertising; hospitals, school boards, universities, colleges, CCACs, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, children's aid societies, hydro entities, even, by the way, from closer to home, public health units. So, for example, when a public health unit largely and very aggressively sends advertising out there—by the way, not only to the public but also directed at physicians—to alert and awaken Ontarians to get themselves checked out for cervical, breast or colon cancer, to sign that organ donation card, to think about having a carbon monoxide monitor in your home, I hope you would agree that that is genuine public interest.

As an example, we, as doctors, know that the lists, unfortunately—for example, side effects of diabetes, heart disease and stroke, which essentially cause huge numbers of people to be on waiting lists for organ transplantation, continue to expand with no real end in sight. That was, by the way, part of the initiative to encourage Ontarians, whether on the Web, video, YouTube or other avenues, to get folks to sign up for organ donation. I think that's very valuable and very important.

Similarly, tourism: Every time Prince Edward County, Niagara Falls, Toronto Island, Blue Mountain and some of our other attractions come forward with advertising, it

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would really, I think, be counterproductive to have to have the AG's office or any office of Parliament sign off

on that particular legislation.

Similarly, consumer protection: You, yourself, MPP from Timmins–James Bay, have raised, very appropriately, issues of aggressive sales, for example, at the doorstep, trying to snare seniors to sign contracts, whether it's for hydro power distribution and so on. You yourself have raised issues about those high-pressure tactics in this House and consumer protection campaigns that are directed to alert vulnerable seniors and other vulnerable populations. These, again, are part and parcel of, I would say, the broader public sector.

We support your bill. We are very much on side, as my minister and the very able parliamentary assistant from the Ministry of Government Services testified. This was originally brought forward to what was a wholly abusive level of advertising—probably, by the way, what is also being mimicked, probably this very hour, on the federal side, by the federal Tories: the almost half a billion dollars that was spent in absolutely blatant self-

promotional advertising.

I remember—I think Michael Bryant was the minister of the day—when we presented that legislation. We were very proud to support it, so we certainly support your legislation in its overall thrust, if not all of the details.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further

debate.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I want to start first by recognizing the member from Timmins–James Bay, a long-serving member. To have a sibling pass on before you is tragic. I extend my sympathies. I know how close she was; I think I did meet your sister at one time, as well, at one of the events we did.

Anyway, the bill itself—turning the page onto something a little less positive, we would not be supporting the bill, as I understand it. But the sentiment here is very important. The arguments being made about the waste of money in advertising are very clear.

Myself, I do use Metrolinx—the GO train, I guess you'd call it. It's one more example, though, where the government has completely screwed up another file.

Metrolinx-what's this about?

Interjections.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, they messed it up; that's an appropriate word. I'd say that the file—I ride the train all the time. Then I see all these ads. As somebody said earlier, it's a monopoly. Get over it. What are they advertising? I can't go and take any other thing, unless it's Greyhound, which isn't subsidized anyway.

But that's only part of the story. I think if you look at it, the bill itself is a mountain of red tape and it creates more organizations, just sorting out—that's organizations that get over \$10 million, in one section of the bill, that are being controlled here. Bill 134 will swamp the Auditor General's office, as she has limited staff and endless work to review the advertising when more and more pressing matters are at hand.

I happen to be a member of the AG committee. They are overworked at the moment and there's more work to

be done. The biggest disappointment in all of this is that they're advertising things over and over again, and I think it sends the wrong message to the people who are paying for it. It's all taxpayer money.

These organizations like the LCBO—there's another one. Gee, I can't believe it. You go in to pick up a small bottle of wine or something and they give you this \$20 booklet with advertising—glossy pages, very heavy print. What's that about? It's a monopoly. Get over it. I mean, you can't buy it except by going there. If you want something, you have to go there to get it. And they build these opulent stores. What's that all about? We've got the most expensive real estate holdings with the LCBO, anchor stores in plazas. You could sell that out of a tent and people would still be lined up at Christmas and Easter and all that to buy.

The waste of money in advertising is clear. That sentiment of the bill I support. The regulatory part of it is not well written, and I suspect that the bill may pass because the Liberals will probably agree with it; they have a coalition now. When they agree with things like this, they will often send it to committee. What will happen then—the viewers should know that private members' business is just that. I commend the member for bringing it forward. It troubles him; portions of it trouble me. It's how it has been written, and the regulations within it are troubling to me. It will probably pass, with the support of their friends the Liberals, and go to committee. When it goes to committee, the viewers should know, it will probably never see the light of day. That's the unfortunate way it works.

Good ideas should be put forward. That was one today by Mr. Wilson from Simcoe–Grey—it should have been passed—on Christmas trees. What's wrong with that? I'll leave to my colleague from Oshawa—he's been dying to speak on this bill. Our critic on this file, Mr. Fedeli, was unable to make it. He regrets that. The member from Oshawa is replacing him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I was the one who wrote the letter—I didn't ever get a response to the letter—about my shock at seeing Metrolinx advertising during the Super Bowl game. The Super Bowl is, let's face it, a huge event with hugely expensive advertising attached to it, geared mainly, one would think, at an American audience.

I have to say, this is within the context of our fight locally in Parkdale—High Park—not just local; throughout five ridings—for the electrification of the air-rail link. I know my friend from Davenport has tabled a bill to this effect. The answer we get back from the Minister of Transportation, the answer we get back from Metrolinx, is they can't do it in time, i.e. it's too expensive. Basically, they just don't have the money. They don't have the money to make the air-rail link electric—and also, by the way, tie it into the transportation system so that we can use it for actual transportation, not just for wealthy tourists for a two-week sporting event. They don't have

the money for that, but they do have some \$30 million this government spent over three months to advertise during a Super Bowl. This makes no sense. Not only does it not make any sense, it actually fuels the anger that is being felt in my riding against this government on the transportation file.

You heard earlier from, again, my friend from Trinity-Spadina about how we used to upload 50% of the operating costs of the TTC. We don't. We haven't under the Mike Harris Progressive Conservatives, and we don't under the Wynne Liberals. We could, but again the answer is, "We don't have the money." "We don't have the money" is the answer for so much with this government, yet they do have the money to advertise Metrolinx during the Super Bowl. Come on. I mean, is it only the New Democrats who feel this outrage? I would conjecture absolutely not. There are many across Ontario who feel this outrage. Of course, one could go on. The gas plant scandal, eHealth, Ornge—\$3 billion has gone out the window for all of those three scandals. But to add insult to injury, then to see government agencies advertise on television—to who, for what, is the question. To who, for what? Who are they trying to convince? It's not like we have a choice. They're the only government agencies there are. Why are they advertising? To talk about how wonderful they are? Please.

That also demands some response, because I can tell you that it salted the wounds when Metrolinx advertises, in five communities. It's not just downtown communities; it's York South–Weston. I can imagine the member from York South–Weston hears from her constituents every time a Metrolinx ad airs, particularly during the Super Bowl, and I'm sure what she hears is this: "Why does your government have money to spend on expensive advertising but not on us so that we can get downtown, not on us so that our children can breathe fresh air?"

Because we know Metrolinx just released their environmental assessment. Wow, finally. The Toronto Board of Health weighed in years ago, but finally Metrolinx is admitting that, yes, diesel trains running by the hundreds through our backyards aren't good for our health. Wow. They finally admitted that. But when we ask them, "Okay, so when are you going to be replacing them with electric trains? Or why don't you do it right the first time, save yourself some money?", that, we don't get an answer for. The only answer we've received is, "Can't afford it. Can't get it done." Again, it's a money issue—a money issue when it comes to the health of residents, but not a money issue when it comes to putting forward the Liberal platform using taxpayers' dollars. Then there's endless amounts of money to be spent-endless amounts.

I'm sad, actually, that our colleagues to the right in more ways than one, the Progressive Conservatives, are not supporting this. I thought they were against wasteful spending. This is an anti-wasteful-spending bill. I don't get it.

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My friend from Durham talks about the LCBO. The point he misses about the LCBO of course is that the profit stays with us. This is one of those government agencies that actually does a good job and their profit stays with us and funds so much of our social services. So it's not just the taxes; it's the profit as well. He missed that point. It's an important point.

But to get back to our House leader's bill, the member from Timmins–James Bay, of course this is a no-brainer. If the government truly believes in transparency, truly believes in value and truly believes that every dollar that taxpayers entrust to us is precious—and it should be—then they would certainly support it too. I expect that they will.

But I would go further than that. I would go further than just support. I would say, "Let's not just support it. Let's not just bury it in committee. Let's actually bring it into being." Only the government can do that. People are confused in a minority government. Let's say it clearly: Only the government can make this law and the government should make this law.

I would love to hear any explanation for not making this law. What can the explanation be? "We like to spend money advertising for the Liberal Party under the guise of government agencies." That's the true answer, surely. That really is the honest answer: "We like it." The Liberal government likes to advertise for the Liberal Party under the guise of government agencies. They like to tell the taxpayer that they are doing wonderful things with their tax dollars, using their tax dollars. That's what they like to do.

I see the political advantage in this but I absolutely do not see the ethicality or the morality in this. I don't think any one of our taxpayers would either.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 134.

I want to send a bit of caution to the wind. I very much appreciate the intention the member from Timmins—James Bay is trying to move forward here, and I fully agree with the intent of it. But we as politicians have to look beyond that. We attempt to pasteurize and purify everything to such an extent that we nullify our existence in this Legislature.

Let me expand on that. I can tell you, when I was the PA for northern development and mines, we had the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. When we would do announcements in northern Ontario, the amount of funds that were spent on advertising were very small comparatively speaking to FedNor. FedNor and the federal Liberal government would come in and make a \$200,000 announcement but would spend \$150,000 on advertising and give the organization or the entity \$50,000. Quite frankly, it was far reversed when we had that opportunity.

What I'm trying to get to is when we look at this and where the next steps are going from this—currently, if you look at the fishing regulations and hunting regulations in the province of Ontario, they're virtually non-existent. Locally, Gagnon Sports used to receive in

excess of 5,000 fishing regulations to hand out on an annual basis. Now they're given 50—from 5,000 to 50—in order to cut back on costs because it's more effective.

When I was my sons' age now, Josh and Garrett, I can tell you one of the things I used to love to read was the maps that came out from the MNR for the regulations, whether they be hunting or fishing regulations. I always loved to read the minister's comments. It was something that inspired me to come to this chamber.

Now, one of the things that Minister Bryant did when he was in there was he eliminated that opportunity to inspire those individuals by eliminating any ability. When the third party was in power, the same Ministry of Natural Resources utilized something and their former leader, Howard Hampton, when he was the leader, ran MNR fact sheets and they were great. I loved them. I used to read them. They would give you all the details about moose and expanding deer populations and what was happening in the province of Ontario. But it was politically incorrect to do that because the perception was there that it was designed to gain political advantage in some way, shape or form. Quite frankly, I don't necessarily believe that all those things that took place were actually designed for political advantage.

A lot of the individuals out there, when they find you're a member of the Legislature, think you're part of government anyway. The average public out there-we have to make sure that the things we do do not remove us-well, it depends on how you handle it. Some members may not, but if there are announcements made in your riding, they certainly think that you're the cause for it, and certainly a lot of individuals would act in those fashions. But blatant political advertising to promote a single cause is something that I don't believe anybody in here agrees with or would support. However, I want to make sure that when we look at these decisions, they're fully thought out on the impacts in many ways, because there are many things that inspire a lot of Ontarians to come forward, to get involved and participate, and I want to make sure that continues on to the best of our ability.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to thank everybody for participating in the debate. It's rather interesting. I kind of expected that the Tories were going to support this and the Liberals were going to oppose it. Instead I'm getting completely the opposite, and I just find it interesting. I think the government understands that what this bill is an attempt to do is to close some of the loopholes that presently exist. There have been changes to the methods of advertising since the original legislation came in, and I think the government has come to the conclusion it may not be a bad idea to take a look at them. It will be interesting to see how much support we get at committee and to what degree it comes out of committee for third reading. That's yet to be seen.

But the Conservatives—I thought you guys were the ones who were supposed to be concerned about the tax-

payers' dime. I suspect the reason you're not supporting this is you think you might be a government and you would like to do some of this advertising yourselves. So that's the only thing that I can think of why you would vote—

Interjections.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Call me cynical if you want, but I've been here a lot of years and I've seen a lot of things. This is an interesting one, Conservatives voting against a bill like this.

I would just ask the Conservatives to reconsider. This is a bill that you can send to committee. If you think there are changes that have to be made, my God, do you think I'm going to get offended? I've been around this place too long to get offended on an amendment of a bill that's been drafted. If you think there's a better way of doing it, a more efficient way of doing it or something that was left out—certainly, allow that to happen in committee. But I just say again, I just find it passing strange that Conservatives would oppose a bill that is attempting to make sure we don't spend taxpayers' dollars needlessly; and when we see Conservatives do that, we ask ourselves, "What is that all about?" I think I've said pretty well what I've had to say in that regard.

With that, I'd like to thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

# PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

# LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act / Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'm here today to speak about my Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. I'd like to thank the NDP researchers and my staff for all the hard work they've done on this bill.

When I was first elected, in 2007, I told the NDP leader that I wanted to take action to protect pensions and to make working life and retirement better for all workers in our province. To achieve that goal, I worked with my colleagues to bring forward an Ontario pension plan that would provide a provincial pension plan similar to the Canada Pension Plan, portable to any employment in Ontario, managed by public pension plan administrators and protected for life. It was a good idea that the current government has taken and remodeled, but what hasn't yet come to legislation is protection for those workers whose

employer closes up shop and winds down their pension plans. For these retirees, they face a reduction in their retirement income by more than a half, in some cases.

This is their money, taken from their paycheques, money they saved in their company pension plan, money that they will lose in the case of a pension plan being wound down by their employer. Many retirees depend not only on their monthly retirement income but in some cases the benefit plan that went with their retirement package. Although we cannot legislate continuance of a benefit package, we can legislate better protection of retirees' monthly income.

When the government engaged Professor Harry Arthurs to investigate and report on pensions and how we can provide better security for the pension system, one of the things that he recommended was an increase in the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund.

#### 1450

This fund was created in the 1980s to provide some protection for retirees whose pension plan was wound up. As noted in the Arthurs report, the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is funded by a levy on plan sponsors based on a per capita premium of \$1 per year, plus a risk premium that varies according to the level at which the plan is funded. The higher the level of funding, the lower the portion of the premium, to an annual maximum of \$4 million.

The PBGF benefit formula has not changed since its inception in 1980, while the premium rates were last revised in 1992.

The PBGF ensures that in the event of a plan failure, retirees will receive compensation sufficient to bring their pension benefits, subject to some exclusions, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per month. Professor Arthurs recommended that the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund be increased to reflect what the current value of these 1980 dollars would be, which is \$2,500 a month.

That's why, today, I'm proud to come before this House to introduce Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. If enacted, this bill will amend the Pension Benefits Act to raise the amount guaranteed by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500 a month. Even my colleagues down the aisle should be happy to support this bill because, as you know, the pension benefit fund was created by former PC Premier Bill Davis. He realized, as do I, that people work hard all their lives and defer their earnings to a pension plan. The least they should expect is what comes to them at the end of their working days. If they cannot count on the retirement income that they contributed over decades, what can they count on?

Unfortunately, Speaker, this is not the case. As we speak, the pensions of thousands of Ontarians are in jeopardy. At Nortel, we saw thousands of hard-working Ontarians not only lose their retirement savings but their medical benefits as well. At Stelco, now US Steel, workers and retirees face the same threat in 2015. This is the case for workers and businesses, large and small, all across this province and industries.

As noted in the Arthurs report, under ill-advised regulations adopted in the 1990s to assist Ontario's major private sector employees, plans deemed to be too big to fail were permitted to elect to be relieved of solvency funding requirements in exchange for paying additional PBGF premiums, to a maximum of \$5 million per plan.

Retirement security continues to be an issue which keeps families up at night worrying about their financial future. They don't have the sweetheart compensation packages like some of the executives walk away with.

Speaker, it's not just my office which hears about this. It's not just a Hamilton issue. Members across all party lines and from across this province receive calls and emails about this issue frequently.

Yesterday I was given a letter by a colleague who received it from a concerned constituent. It reads, "I am a retired employee.

"When I retired, the pension plan and company benefits fund were in a surplus situation.

"They last reported the fund's condition three years ago, announcing a \$300-million deficit in the ... fund.

"As they have not had to report or contribute to the fund in the last three years, I am worried about the current deficit."

The owners of the company "are, piecemeal, selling off assets and not making the required investments" to keep up the plan.

"They recently sold [assets and leases] which netted them \$800 million" without making their contribution.

"Rather than use this money properly, they distributed a \$5 dividend to shares worth about \$18 at the time.

"Worse, they have announced that they will probably make another special dividend sometime in 2014 for \$4 per share."

Speaker, at this single company, 12,000 retired employees and employee spouses will suffer.

This constituent ended their letter noting that they are appealing to the members of this House "to try and get pension plans and benefit fund status when a company goes bankrupt."

They "ask that I convince the appropriate governments to legislate the elimination of shortfalls in pension plans and protect benefits."

Sadly, this is the case for tens of thousands of Ontario residents who are either currently relying on their pensions or will be upon retirement.

Although the government has proposed an Ontario pension plan, we have yet to see any details. Additionally, I have not heard what commitment it will make to those many retirees who have had their planned retirement income completely upset and may not receive anything near what they have saved or planned for.

This bill is not just designed to protect single workers and their families; rather, it will protect whole communities. Many of our rural and northern communities rely heavily on one single industry or business. We've seen entire communities devastated with a plant closure or business closure. This situation is made exponentially worse when retirees of those same companies are left

without their pensions. If people don't get their monthly pension benefits, how can they support their families, let alone their local businesses? I think the answer is quite simple: They cannot.

The Liberal government has had the Arthurs report since October 31, 2008. Recommendation 6-17 of the Arthurs report states: "The level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500 to reflect the effect of inflation on the original"—1980s—"maximum of \$1,000."

Most of the people collecting pensions from the 1970s and 1980s are below the \$1,000 mark. It doesn't help anyone above the \$1,000 mark, and that's where 90% of

the pensions are today.

Additionally, the Arthurs report in 2008 recommended that "The superintendent (or other agency responsible for the administration of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund) should recommend to the Minister of Finance within one year:

"—the formula by which benefit levels should be

determined on a going-forward basis;

"—the basis on which the levy paid by sponsors should be calculated;

"—procedures for ensuring that both the benefits and the levy are adjusted at regular intervals; and

"—any other matter relevant to the implementation of this recommendation."

This section of the report concludes that the recommendations should be accompanied by a statement concerning the anticipated effects of any such adjustment, and the minister should act promptly upon receipt of these recommendations and the accompanying statement. Speaker, that should have happened in 2009. It's 2014. It has been five and a half years.

People in this Legislature should be paying attention, because we all have retirees, many of them, and we're a growing population of elderly in this province. We see nothing from the government or the official opposition. Does this government consider this a prompt response?

If we do not act soon, people face the possibility of losing up to 50% of their pensions. As seniors are living longer and having less income than ever before, even those with good pensions will not have enough to get by in 20 years.

These people built our province. They deserve a life with dignity, a retirement of dignity. That's why I'm asking you all in this House to support Bill 174. We can do something in this House to protect the hard-working Ontarians of this province, the seniors of our province and the working people of our society.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I ask for further debate, I'd ask everyone to kind of curb the chitchat that's going around in the chamber. It's a little noisy, and difficult to hear the speaker.

Further debate?

**Mr. Steven Del Duca:** It's a great honour for me to have the chance to stand in my place today and speak to Bill 174. I listened very closely as the member who is

sponsoring this particular private member's bill, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, provided his contribution to the discussion around this particular measure.

I wanted to begin by saying that not only am I happy to have the chance to speak regarding the issue—because it is a very important issue for people, I'm sure, in his community of Hamilton and mine of Vaughan, and to individuals living right across the province of Ontario—I'm also happy to let him know that while I may take issue with some of the specific details of some of the commentary that was provided in debate by the member who is sponsoring this particular bill, I feel it is important, after the discussion is done here today, that this bill should move on to committee. Therefore, I will be supporting the undertaking from the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

It's interesting that near the end of his remarks, he did talk about the importance—because we do have so many individuals living in our respective communities for whom this is an issue, for whom the entire notion of pensions and retirement security is not just an issue of concern but, for many people, a looming crisis.

For example, tomorrow in my own community, I will be attending something that is being organized by a series of seniors' organizations and seniors' clubs and that is called the healthy seniors round table. I expect somewhere between 300 and 500 seniors will be at this event tomorrow. It's good that the minister responsible for seniors and other special guests will be there with us tomorrow.

But I know already, having spent a lot of time talking to seniors living in my community and others who are approaching their retirement years, that the issue of pensions, the issue of retirement security will be top of mind for them. I know, from talking in our own government caucus to individuals representing communities from right across Ontario, be it from the north, from the east, the southwest, wherever folks are coming from, that this is something that we are hearing about, loud and clear, from people that we are here to represent. Something needs to be done with respect to ensuring that individuals have a greater sense of security and a greater level of income support in their retirement years.

1500

To the point the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek raised, again near the end of his remarks, these are, after all, the individuals who have worked their entire lives to build the community, to build both the physical and the social infrastructure that we rely on. When I look at my six-year-old and my three-year-old daughters, I think about what we want to leave to them but I also realize, very importantly, how blessed I am because I am an individual who is growing up in a community, growing up in a region—and frankly in a province—where those who have come before us have made such an exceptional contribution. And the responsibility falls to us here in this place at this particular juncture to make sure that as individuals are getting closer to that point of

retiring, or have already retired, their governments—I would argue both federal and provincial—step in and demonstrate leadership on this issue and come forward with a plan; at least begin the dialogue, begin the discussion to develop a plan that will enhance the retirement security that I believe these people deserve.

That's why I'm extremely proud to be a member of this particular government, a government that over the last number of months, under the leadership of Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa, has worked so hard to begin this dialogue, to take it to that next level, to strongly encourage the federal government, not in an adversarial way, but to strongly urge the federal government to work with us and to work with the rest of the provinces to enhance the Canada Pension Plan. I think everybody would recognize right across this country, and certainly across Ontario, that it is extremely important—more so than important—that the Canada Pension Plan is almost a fundamental pillar of the society we have.

Folks in my riding love the Canada Pension Plan. They think it's a great thing. They think the fact that it's secure, that it's solid, that it's providing support for them, is important. But there's a clear recognition, as the member from Trinity-Spadina just said, and certainly we recognize on this side of the House, that the \$12,000 or \$12,500 that CPP pays out is not enough anymore, especially for middle-class families and middle-class workers who have spent their lives working so hard, raising their families, playing by the rules, paying their taxes, contributing to society, only to find out as they enter their retirement that they are no longer able to support themselves in a manner that's consistent with what they deserve from my estimation, from my perspective—and that's not good. That's not good for us as a society. It's not even good for us economically, frankly, because ultimately they'll have to rely on additional services that will cost the treasury.

The fact of the matter is that months ago Premier Wynne decided that this was something we needed to get done, it was something we needed to do right. She reached out to her provincial counterparts; she reached out to the federal government. Unfortunately, for reasons that I can't fathom, and the people from my community can't fathom, the federal Conservative government was completely and totally unwilling to even enter into a discussion with the provinces regarding creating some kind of pan-Canadian pension enhancement. It appears that ship has sailed, Speaker, unfortunately. I would strongly urge here today that the federal Conservative government representatives who may be watching or may hear about this later reconsider that decision, because it's not in the best interests of people from coast to coast to coast.

Having said that, Speaker, our Premier and our finance minister here in Ontario have made it very clear that, witnessing that abdication of leadership from the federal Conservative government, we are going to move forward with a made-in-Ontario pension enhancement or pension plan. We recognize that this is important. It is the right thing to do socially. It's the right thing in terms of making sure that we continue to provide for those who have built what we now continue to enjoy, and it's also important even from an economic perspective.

So, as I wrap up very quickly, I do applaud the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for bringing this measure back to this House, to this discussion. I look forward to supporting the bill today and I look forward to the rest of the discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the responsibility, as the Progressive Conservative critic for retirement security, to be able to respond to Bill 174, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

This is a simple and unassuming bill. It's only one page in length, and it proposes to amend the workings of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund by raising the cap on benefits paid from the fund. The cap is now \$1,000 per month. Bill 174 would move the cap up to \$2,500 per month. But here's the problem: The fund is unfunded not underfunded but unfunded—in practical terms, compared to the claims on the horizon. It hasn't had money to fund claims itself for four years. I'm actually amazed that the member from Stoney Creek is proposing increasing this amount as the key to his bill, because it really is nothing but a mirage. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is like an insurance policy. Ontario's private employers subscribe to it if they offer a corporate plan to employees. The fund pays pension benefits to eligible private pension plan members if the host company cannot because of bankruptcy.

If we look a little deeper into the composition of the fund, 49% of the covered plans have 100 to 999 members, 36% have fewer than 100 members, and less than 1% of covered plans have over 10,000 members. In total, the fund has over 1.1 million plan members—48% active, 36% pensioners and 16% deferred pensioners. In the membership, there is a significant concentration in the manufacturing sector, which represents 59% of all plans, 54% of all plan members and 87% of current claims withdrawing from the fund. Over 73% of member plans are in a deficit position on a solvency basis. This is one indicator that tells us that this fund may be drawn down more in the future.

The fund was set up in 1980 by Premier Bill Davis to be self-financing, but it has been far from that, unfortunately, for a long time now. The premium structure hasn't changed since 1993, which is \$1 per member, plus a risk fee based on the financials of the plan. In its present form, the fund is outdated and unworkable. The cost to the economy to try to salvage it would require premiums to be increased by 1,000%—hardly a responsible initiative.

Don Drummond, in his report of 2012, recommended "that the province either terminate the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund or explore the possibility of transferring it to a private insurer. The fund is no longer sustainable

in its current form as it presents a large fiscal risk for the province."

Since 2010, over a billion taxpayer dollars have been infused into the fund because of its deficit. The fund simply was not designed for today's economic realities and gives a false sense of security to Ontario's private pensioners and their employers. Without government bailouts, the fund would be defunct. The government has known the fund has been in a deficit since 2008 and has done nothing about it. They know it's a mirage that lulls the dread of private pensioners.

Over the last decade, the Liberals have squandered their time in office—half of those years with a good economy. It could have tackled the real issues; it has not. Stewardship of the province's finances and preventing the failure of systems that people rely on are the real

issues of government.

Former finance minister Dwight Duncan and Premier McGuinty promised reform and commissioned reports. They promised the government would fix the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This government stalled on that and made the situation worse by effectively bailing out the fund. As far as comprehensive retirement security options for Ontarians, this government has also stalled on their promises to allow pooled registered pension plans.

Be sure to look for answers in the budget a couple of weeks from now. There are two ways to go for the fund: either tackle the problem or, as is the practice of this government, throw money at it to escape accountability. This government never does the hard work of finding efficiencies by reform, and this bill, Bill 174, helps the government ignore the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1510

Mr. Taras Natyshak: From the outset, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller. In his preamble to his bill, he said that when he was first elected in 2007, he told the NDP leader at that time that he wanted to make this issue a priority and something that he championed. I can tell you first-hand that he has certainly done that during his tenure as a member.

I can recall—I don't even know if he does recall, but Mr. Miller came down to my neck of the woods in Windsor and Essex county during a situation that evolved around a company called Aradco-Aramco. Do you remember that? It was a situation where the company had declared bankruptcy and was attempting to liquidate all of its assets without paying its debt to the workers, and abdicating its responsibility, whether it be pensions or benefits. The workers occupied the two plants. Labour activists from all around gathered, and Paul was right there, as was I. We talked about pensions. We talked about the need to protect pensions and the lack of legislative accountability and legislative fortitude to back up workers who find themselves in these predicaments. Of course, I certainly have seen them in my region.

General Chemical is one that stands out, where workers were left high and dry when the company left the town of Amherstburg and continued its profitable operations in the United States but left workers at the bottom of the list when it came to their obligations around pensions. Specifically in Amherstburg, it precipitated the federal leader of the NDP at that time, Jack Layton, to make it a priority to address the issue at the federal level, where a bill was put forward that would have called on the federal government to change the rules so that workers would be paid first upon insolvency or bankruptcy. It was called the "Workers First" bill.

I actually campaigned during the 2008 campaign on that policy, and it resonated. Not only did it resonate with pensioners or those who were about to retire but it resonated with young people, because those who are looking to enter the job market understand right now that things are so dire that older workers have to remain in the workforce because they don't have defined benefit plans and they don't feel secure in their workplaces and they know that at any moment, even though they've contributed to a pension plan their entire careers, it could be wiped out. There is so much insecurity out there.

One of the metrics that we saw today—I don't know if anyone has referenced it, but just this morning, as I woke up and I turned on CBC Newsworld, they told me that the top 86 income earners in the country, the richest 86 Canadians, have the combined wealth of the poorest 11 million in the country. There is a disparity between the rich and the poor that continues to grow and really begs us to pay attention to what workers face and, of course,

what older workers, in particular, face.

The pension benefits guarantee and the reforms that my colleague is proposing today—the pension benefits guarantee I see as a backstop, a pension of last resort. When all else has failed, the government, in its wisdom, at one point or another, decided that we had to be there. We had to come up with something to backstop the failures of pension plans out there in the private sector when they did fail. Of course, various incarnations of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund have been around. We saw in the mid-1990s where they deemed some of the contributors to the pension benefits guarantee too big to fail. I guess times were good. But then we saw that that was a mistake. We saw that when we allowed some flexibility in contributions to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, it didn't necessarily equal out to profitability or security of those larger corporations.

So we should never go there again, I submit. But what we should recognize is that since the fund was set up, times have changed. Things have gotten more expensive. The needs and requirements of seniors and retirees in this province have become greater. It is why I'm pleased to support the reforms that are proposed by my colleague the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: raising that \$1,000-a-month guarantee to \$2,500.

I want to acknowledge—and maybe just as a last note—that this is an issue that is far-reaching and broad in its scope in terms of retirees. These aren't simply private sector blue-collar workers. These are white-collar workers in large multinationals who are fearful of their pension plans.

I have a letter from Cody Cooper from my area, who is doing a lot of great work with Chrysler retirees. The Chrysler Canada Retirees Organization board of directors—Cody Cooper, Harold Dawe, Don Kreibich, Lou Ienna, Kathy Hartig, Joe Bevacqua; these men and women are raising the issue of pension security. They're calling on a minimum solvency rate for private pension plans out there at 90%—we need to do that; we need to ensure that—and that the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund limit be increased to \$2,500, which is what my friend's bill does. They're calling on employers to communicate actuarial evaluations of their plans annually, and that these are communicated to plan members no later than six months from the period end.

In the province of Ontario, there has been an undue delay in meaningful implementation of some rather basic recommendations with respect to accountability, reporting and transparency. These folks submit that there's no better time than now to address those issues.

I just want to give them a shout-out and thank them for doing this. I hope they're paying attention and seeing that New Democrats take the issue of pension security and income security seriously. With the swift passage of this bill by my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, we can ensure that there is that security that is so desperately needed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Speaker, I would echo the sentiments of my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and, of course, my colleague from Vaughan.

This is a very thoughtful bill that asks us to confront an inequity that doesn't seem to stem from an action taken by any single entity. For example, a generation ago or two generations ago, when you joined your company, they said, "And here are your pension benefits." When did that stop? There was never a piece of legislation that said there are no longer defined benefit pensions or, in many cases, even defined contribution pensions. It just stopped. It was around the same time that we started to see the great aggregation of wealth at the top, and I certainly can remember a lot of the merger and acquisition specialists back in the 1980s cannibalizing the pension fund.

What this asks the province to do is to take a fresh look at the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is that pool of money where, if a pension plan can't meet its obligations, the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, which is funded by the contributors—in other words, the intent is not that it be funded by the taxpayer—can provide a top-up from whatever the amount does pay to \$1,000.

One of the things that has to be ironed out in committee is to take the member's aspiration to go from \$1,000 to \$2,500 a month, which while it would clearly be helpful in providing some income security if you're one of those who would be receiving the pension—one of the things we'll study in committee is what would be the cost of doing so? For example, on the province of

Ontario's website, you can find a study that says: "In the absence of any future external funding," and assuming "the present coverage level of \$1,000, an increase in overall assessments"—in other words, the amount that you pay—would be somewhere around 800% "to ensure the sustainability" of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund exists. "If coverage was increased to \$2,500," that would be something like "a 1000% increase in assessments."

I understand where the member is coming from, but the purpose of sending it to committee is to get at some of these things, get them ironed out and say how that increase would be funded.

1520

This is one of the initiatives that dovetails very nicely with the government's own efforts to ensure that particularly young men and women entering the workforce in Ontario at this time can expect, during the course of their lives, to contribute to a pension fund, one that would be portable with them, one to which, ideally, their employer would make a co-contribution, and one that corporate raiders can't loot and leave the person after working in a company, after many years of having contributed to the fund to find out that the fund was sold to pay off creditors, and they're left with nothing. While the member's bill is not about that, this is a bill that certainly is about addressing that and other systemic problems.

A number of years ago, one of the early lone wolves in Canada explaining the shortfall of the manner in which Canadian working men and women would see their pensions funded was former Premier Dalton McGuinty, who used to come in and say, "Mine was the lone voice at the Council of the Federation in talking about this." Over the years he started to get more and more of his fellow Premiers to start asking around in their provinces and to have those other Premiers say, "Yes, my people are talking about it too, and it is something that we're worried about."

Now the ideal way to get at the inadequacies in pension compensation—many of which stem from assumptions made some 60 years ago, at a time when it was expected that men and women would retire at or about the age of 65, and at the time the life expectancy of a retired man would be between five and around eight years, and of a retired woman, seven to 10 or 11 years. The assumptions built into pension plans assumed those life expectancies, but today a man can expect to live a very healthy, productive, fulfilling life deep into his 80s, and a woman very often into her 90s. A young man, a young woman or a baby born today has about a 50-50 chance of living to see the age of 100.

The member has brought up a serious issue, and I do think that this should go to committee to be studied further.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The Ontario provincial government is broke—not just broke, but in debt to the tune of \$267 billion. That's \$20,000 for every man, woman and

child in the province of Ontario. Alarmingly, almost 10% of Ontario's tax revenue goes toward debt interest payments. That percentage will inevitably increase when interest rates rise, and rise they will. Mortgaging Ontarians' future is irresponsible, not to mention immoral. That is why we cannot pass Bill 174: We simply cannot afford it.

The provincial government does not have the financial capacity to increase spending. Ontarians are tapped out. Both the Liberal Party and NDP fail to understand that governments are no different than households: They cannot spend more than they take in. Deficit spending as a long-term strategy is a policy of failure. The provincial government needs to learn to live within its means, not fund NDP schemes in an effort to avoid an election. This is not a one-time expenditure item. The proposed increase in the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund cap would blow a hole in the provincial government's budget year after year after year.

I understand that the NDP is concerned about employees who lose their pensions and who may not have sufficient funds for their retirements. But there is a way to help employees and their employers. Government should reduce the cost of living for all citizens and provide a competitive business environment for companies to thrive. The first step should be to scrap the Green Energy Act and clean up the numerous bloated agencies that have bungled the energy file, particularly Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Ontario Power Authority: 12,300 public sector employees in the energy sector are on the sunshine list. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent growing these agencies to produce less power. This is not sustainable. We should scrap the \$5.7-billion pre-election spending plan of this wasteful government. We should put an end to corporate

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope the member is going to tie this in to the piece of legislation that is in front of us.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: If the provincial government had followed the recommendations of the Drummond report, we would be on track to eliminating our deficit and controlling our debt. Our massive debt is killing the government's ability to provide the services our people deserve and need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, thank you. I only have five minutes.

I just want to congratulate my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his bill—for introducing this bill—and for having been a champion of pension reform in general for the 65% of the population that doesn't have a pension. It was he who led that fight four years ago, along with our leader, of course. But together, we have led that fight so that those who don't have a pension finally get something.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Show us the pecunia.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Very funny, doc.

If you'll recall, when this member introduced that bill and our leader spoke to it, you had the former finance minister say, "We don't think it's a good idea."

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Don't live in the past.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was just but four years ago—but four years ago—and many of you fine people were there at the time. You all attacked him and his idea, because you said, "No, that's not the way to go." What is the way to go? They said, "The way to go is to go after the feds."

We need a national-

Interjection.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Of course a national plan would have been better, but you guys said no. The provincial plan is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member for Trinity-Spadina to speak through the Chair and ignore the heckling.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, Speaker, of course.

You then said that his idea was a bad one.

Behold, a couple of years later, Kathleen Wynne has a bright idea. She's got a provincial pension plan that she's introducing—no mention of the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek; no mention of the NDP that might have brought the idea forward; no mention of the fact that you fine people criticized it at the time. Now behold, Wynne, the new Premier, has a new idea, borrowed, of course, from the NDP, but we dare not say it publicly.

We get tired of giving you ideas that you then appropriate as your own without giving credit to this side. You understand why we get tired? I just wanted to speak to that briefly as a way of saying that this is a plan that fits this party and fits this member, and this new bill is an extension of that.

So while we want the 65% of the people who have absolutely nothing to have a plan, this speaks to those who are in a plan, God bless. I know the Tories don't like it, because they are the handmaidens of the corporate sector. This is the party that has given \$13 billion away in corporate tax cuts that these fine corporations have socked away, to the tune of \$600 billion that is not being spent.

I understand Tories; I do. They're not concerned about the little guy. They're concerned about the big guy, and they're quite happy to keep giving them tax cuts under the guise that they will create jobs, of which we have seen no evidence, but they have given a whole lot of money away. By the way, the Liberals, not to forgive them, have done the same. They are working hand in hand—not to the same extent, I understand. But for a long, long time, they were kind of happy to cut corporate taxes, too.

On this debate, of course, they differ. I've heard two members support our bill and our member. This is good. But to think that we can't afford pensions while the 1,600 billionaires across the world manage all of us as marion-

ettes, to think that we can't take but a little of that money to serve the general interests and the general public—it's something that I think we could do. It is indeed criminal that we can't help out.

#### 1530

The member from Essex reminded us that 86 families in Canada control more money than 11 million Canadians—86 families. You understand? There's a whole lot of accumulated wealth in the hands of a few, and we can't afford pensions. But we can afford to give them more and more of our taxpayers' money so that they can have a better life—the billionaires; who simply need a little more by taking away from those who don't have anything, from those who don't have a pension; taking that away so that the billionaires could enjoy themselves just a tad more, because they just don't have enough.

I support this bill; it's a good one. Send it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to respond to my colleague from the NDP on this improvement of the Pension Benefits Act. It's a no-go, unfortunately, and I'm going to say it with three points that I have to make. One is, I'm a retiree from General Motors; I served there 31 years—that pension is in huge trouble. That will mean that my pension won't be paid if they go into corporate bankruptcy. I want to thank Brian Rutherford, who's the president of the group; Mike Powell, who's very expert on this issue; as well as Lynn McCullough and others who have worked very hard to form a group called GENMO. In that group—I've worked with them.

I have two questions on the order paper: that the government of Ontario, under Kathleen Wynne, turned their backs on those retirees—this is what happened. The Minister of Finance: I'm asking him to immediately modify regulation 321/09 to ensure that General Motors Canada Ltd. immediately address and resolve the existing pension shortfall created in 1992, regulation 5.1.

The second question on the order paper is to the Minister of Finance as well: to explain why, in the agreement, the \$4-billion allowance guaranteed to General Motors in 2009 which was to allow GMC to make the pension whole was instead contributed to the prior-year credit balance, thereby immediately robbing the money from the pensioners themselves.

This is a complex issue—that's just one part. How complex is it? Of the 362 recommendations by Don Drummond in his report, there is a whole section about regulating. What he recommended—and I encourage the member to listen:

"Recommendation 19.3: We recommend"—this is Dr. Don Drummond, former Deputy Minister of Finance, federally, and an excellent guy. "We recommend that the province either terminate the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund or explore the possibility of transferring it to a private insurer. The fund is no longer sustainable in its current form as it presents a large fiscal risk for the province in the event of another economic downturn."

The economic downturn is this: Charles Sousa said yesterday at a meeting that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to refer to titles.

Mr. John O'Toole: —the growth in the economy is going to be 2% growth until 2035. We're into a flatline shakedown in the economy. None of this is sustainable. There are a series of recommendations, if people would like to contact me.

I went to a debate the other day on HOOPP, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan. They're selling the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, but they're really not selling that at all. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is funded by the employer. It's a risk tax on the fund, so it's a tax on employers. That's what it is. There are very few funds that are funded today, completely anyway, to absorb the risk. This guarantee fund is not sustainable. It's said by all the experts. They want to double it. That's why they don't understand how it works.

I'm going to say that there was an article this week in the paper—you should be interested. It said, "Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Posts First Surplus in 10 Years." It has never been funded. CPP has never been funded, and it isn't funded, and we're going to add more risk to the government? Listen to the experts and do the right thing and learn a little bit more about pensions themselves.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank all the speakers that spoke on this bill.

The member from Essex kind of hit the mark when he said that 81 people, or groups, control 14 million people, financially, in this province.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Eighty-six, and 11 million

Mr. Paul Miller: Right.

The bottom line is that the billionaires get more money, and the people that have worked all their lives for their pensions are in jeopardy. The Conservative Party of Ontario will support the billionaires and the corporations that are, frankly, screwing the working people of this province out of their benefits and pensions they've worked for their whole life. This plan can work if it's funded in different manners, which will be discussed. We will bring forward ways to finance this plan that this group over here would eliminate.

They would eliminate it. They don't show caring for the pensioners of this province; they just say it's another tax, another burden to the finances of the corporations. They don't talk about all the people they worked beside—

Interiection.

Mr. Paul Miller: That member worked at GM, worked beside all of these guys who are losing their pensions. I don't know how he can stand up and say, "Well, I'm going to lose my pension." What he doesn't say is that he's got another job and he's got other income

from another position. These other people in these places don't have any other income. All they've got is old age security and CPP, which comes to about \$1,300 a month. I would challenge any member over there to live on \$1,300 a month. They can't.

What we're trying to do here is supplement the people who are poor and struggling, and a middle class who cannot afford to retire in dignity. I would challenge any member here: Who would want any one of their family members to live in poverty and not dignity in their retirement years after working 40 years? I don't think they would do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members'

public business.

# SAVING APPRENTICES' JOBS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 POUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES EMPLOIS POUR APPRENTIS

Mr. Dunlop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes

for his presentation.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, everyone, who's here today.

I want to read, first of all, the explanatory note:

"Currently, regulations made under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, provide that statements of membership for members of the college in the journeypersons candidates class expire after one year. The act is amended to provide that such statements of membership expire only upon the issuance of a certificate of qualification to the member.

"The act currently provides that a person who held a valid training agreement registered under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, or a valid contract of apprenticeship filed under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act is deemed to hold a statement of membership as an apprentice under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, until the expiry date specified in the act, and provides that the person may obtain a statement of membership as an apprentice if he or she files an application and pays a fee by the expiry date. The bill eliminates the expiry date."

Mr. Speaker, we've had this debate in the House a few times. First of all, I'm dealing primarily with the 85,000 apprentices in the province of Ontario who have not signed up for membership in the College of Trades, which is apparently due April 8 of this year. I have received no information from the College of Trades or any communications from the minister's office that that number is decreasing. I only hear that people are signing

up every day. Okay?

Second of all, the 4,300 journeyperson candidates in the province of Ontario have until April 8 as well, although just recently, on Monday night or Monday afternoon, a letter came out from the College of Trades saying, "You'll actually now have until July 4, 2014." I think they knew the bill was coming up, and that particular date got rid of a possibility of conversation or discussion when, actually, an election could be taking place, as well. I think the government is being protected by the College of Trades, and the government is protecting the College of Trades as well; there's no question about that.

Why did I bring this up? The apprenticeship sponsors in the province of Ontario—that's the people who sign up the apprentices—got this letter from Mr. Duguid's office, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, dated February 21, 2014, from the five directors in the province: Robert Dupuis, Mary Joe Freire, June Fox-Casey, Sheree Mahood and Teresa Damaso. This is what they received. It sparked turmoil in the industry. I'll read the main section of it here:

"Apprentices who had a registered training agreement prior to April 8, 2013, automatically became members of the college's apprentices class for one year without application or payment of the college's membership fee. That period will be ending on April 8, 2014.

"If you have apprentices in this situation"—I understand that there are 4,300 journeyperson candidates and up to 10,000 apprentices—"please encourage them to submit their application form and pay their membership fee to the college in order to keep their membership active and their training agreement(s) registered so you can continue to train and work with them as apprentices. If your apprentices fail to renew their membership by April 8, 2014, their college membership will expire and their registered training agreement will be cancelled. This means you will no longer be able to train them as apprentices and they will no longer be able to work in any compulsory aspect of their trade."

That's what came out from the minister's staff in the province of Ontario. That means to me that these people are going to lose their jobs. That's what I get out of it. Maybe there's another letter I didn't see. All the people I work with, some of the people in the Stop the Trades Tax campaign—there are over 8,600 employers now, representing about, and I forget the exact number, 300,000 tradespeople. I don't think they've seen anything to say that would change, either. That's the gist of the bill.

Just recently, and I think it's because we brought this bill out, one of the apprenticeship candidates that we had in the House, a young lady by the name of Kailin Ambrose, got this letter this week on Monday. It basically said, "Now you've got until July 4, 2014, and you will have to pass it by that date." It's a one-time shot only. You don't have to write it by April 8. You have to write it by July 4, but you're out of luck if you don't get it. That's what this letter says.

What I'm doing with this bill, ladies and gentlemen, is that I wish I could get the support of the House. I want this expiry date removed. I've been all over Ontario with this issue. The College of Trades: When they brought it in, they thought it was probably a good idea. I think it's a

disaster. This type of nonsense is going on.

We're talking about people that are working in jobs, and they are doing a good job in that particular trade they're in. I think of young Kailin, who was here. I've been out to see her hairdressing salon. She has a lot of clients. She does excellent work. She just can't pass that final test. She needs 70%. She's getting 65%, 67%. It has cost her over \$1,000 so far in fees. She just can't pass it. But she's terrified—now it's on July 4—that they're going to have to let her go because apparently, even the employers could be subjected to fines if they keep her on. That's wrong. That's not the Ontario I grew up in. Come on. What are we? This is not Nicaragua or some bloody place. This is Ontario, where we want people to work. And there's a young lady who's trying to raise her little boy. They're going to put her out of work with this crazy nonsense. What kind of an idiot would think of writing that letter? That's what I say. And it's wrong. It's plain wrong that we allow this kind of nonsense to carry on. That's why the Stop the Trades Tax campaign was started. It has now expanded to all of the hairdressers across Ontario. They now have Cut the Salon Tax.

Every once in a while, they'll find somebody who will speak up for the Ontario College of Trades, and they send a letter in. You know what happens then? The College of Trades tweets it out to everybody. They think everybody loves it. But who are these people who like the College of Trades? I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it's likely the people that are earning money from it. Guess what? We've got a sunshine list at the Ontario College of Trades starting at \$180,000 for the CEO. And the enforcement cop—I think he's actually a guy that's probably double-dipping: Robert Onyschuk. It looks like he's at \$137,000.

Now little Kailin, who's worried about her job, if she does work past July 4 and she hasn't written that exam—Bob Onyschuk and his gang, these thugs from the enforcement division, are going to come in and make sure they get her out of that trade. They actually had people from MTCU drop in to see her who said, "You should

have picked another career."

Here's what's wrong. Remember all the years when—I need some water. I'm drying up here. Sorry. I get pretty emotional about this subject. Remember when we were directed to go into the trades or into sciences or maths or whatever it was? A lot of people actually did that, and they got directed into those particular trades. But now, in education, everybody passes. You go to graduation, and everybody gets a scroll, or they get a diploma. But there are people who have trouble writing an exam. They actually have trouble writing that exam. They freeze on it. They may have learning skills problems, but why should they be put out of a job? There's got to be a better way than writing this threatening letter saying that on July 4 you're going to be out of work.

I've got a lot of supporters here today. These folks in the gallery here are representing—I can't remember everybody's name exactly—somewhere around 350,000 people. The fact of the matter is, the people now that are joining the Cut the Salon Tax campaign and the Stop the Trade Tax campaign—it's growing, it's mushrooming in a huge way. If I can find my note here, I probably have—I never made a regular speech up. But the reality is—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speak from your heart, Garf.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pardon me? No, I have all the names. Quite frankly, we've got groups like the Ontario sewer and water main contractors, the Ontario Electrical League. We have First Choice Haircutters. We have Magicuts. We have LIUNA, the biggest construction trade union in Canada. They've now joined the Stop the Trades Tax campaign. These people are serious. They see jobs being lost. I talked to people in Minister Kenney's office, including in a meeting he was at, and they said, "Why is Ontario the only province in Canada that's going the opposite way?" Everyone else is trying to create jobs and making the skilled trades a priority. What are we doing? We're building a barrier in front of them.

So what's got to happen—you folks all know how I stand on this; I've been fairly outspoken on it. I think the minister knows. I want the College of Trades abolished; it's that simple. I have never seen anything so pathetic. Even the Ontario Chamber of Commerce says, "You know what? Let's tinker with it a little bit, see if we can fix it. But you know what? If you can't fix it, abolish it." We're hearing that over and over again, everywhere we

go.

My phone never quits ringing. I spend hours every day on the phone as critic for skilled trades and apprenticeship reform. I'm doing events and, second of all, going out trying to calm people down. People are picking up the phone; they're just screaming at me because I'm a politician. I said, "Look, I'm trying to help you, buddy." They're going into service centres and to automotive dealerships. They're going into hairdressing salons, into barbers' places. And they're not even politically smart. They go in there and they've got these fancy uniforms on and a brand new car—these enforcement guys—and what they're saying is. "Where is your licence? I want to see it on the wall."

What the heck is going on here? Speaker, what is going on that we have to put up with this kind of nonsense? Again, we are Ontario. We are supposed to be the engine that drives the Canadian economy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: So they're not supposed to have

licences? Come on, can you imagine?

Mr. Garfield Dunlon: And the m

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: And the minister—I hear he's starting to chirp already, but the reality is, he's got nothing to come back with. Every question I've ever asked him had the same answer. He refers to something: "The decision's made at the Albany Club." That's the kind of thing he says. What's he talking about? I don't even go to the Albany Club. The reality is, over and over and over again we will say—

Mr. Paul Miller: You've been there.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I sure hope the NDP know where you stand on this. I know you voted against my

opposition day motion last year. I hope you're wise enough to start supporting what I'm trying to say here. You've got to have this expiry date removed. This is

dangerous for Ontario.

Finally, as we wind down here, the other thing the College of Trades is doing in a very sneaky way is they're trying to compulsorily certify trades—the trade of carpentry. I don't know how dumb you would have to be to approve compulsory certification of carpentry. It will simply cripple the construction industry in the province of Ontario. No one will know where to take an apprenticeship because the ratios are already out of whack. They're at 3 to 1 for carpentry. So they will completely wreck it. I know people all over Ontario that are going to leave Ontario with their manufacturing. They'll leave with their manufacturing and their building because of this idiotic Ontario College of Trades. Let's scrap it and let's get rid of this expiry date.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further

debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. Despite the member's passion on this issue, I have so many problems with what he has said. At the same time, I do understand some of the aspects of what he's talking about. When he talks about compulsory certification, yes, there are issues there. When he's talking about ratios for the trades, or specifically for carpentry, he says the ratios are out of whack—according to him, a politician deciding, dictating what he thinks, as an individual, the ratio should be. So that very basic premise in what he has said, that he dictates, he deems those ratios out of whack, compromises his entire argument on the College of Trades. I initially, from the outset, supported the concept of the College of Trades—

Interjections.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would just remind members, when the last speaker spoke, the House was completely silent. I would ask you to give this speaker the same attention.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Good speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to tame it down a little bit and try to bring everybody

a little more into a level of civility.

One of the rationales behind the College of Trades was to take the decision-making process out of the ministry, out of the bureaucracy and out of the realm of politics. I wholeheartedly endorsed that concept because of the comments of the originator of the bill, just on that basic premise. The decision around ratios should be industry- and worker-driven. They should decide what market demands are, based on data, real scientific data, not what an individual member from an individual riding might think they need or what his or her stakeholders need. I understand that principle. It safeguards safety; it

assures us that we have a good supply of apprentices entering into those various labour markets. I think, again, it depoliticizes it. I appreciate that and understand that.

Unfortunately, the member, in his previous incarnation around reforms to the College of Trades, talked about blowing it up, ending it completely. So what is the alternative? He wants to bring it back into the realm of politics and bring it back into the realm of the ministerial purview rather than having industry drive the decisions around it. Now, who those industry people are and if they have biases is up for debate. I agree that we need to have a lot more oversight on what is happening at the college, but to blow it up offers us no assurance that anything will get better.

He spoke about the previous incarnation of his bill, or reforms to the college. It was to go to a one-to-one ratio across the board for all trades, no matter what sector. I'm telling you that would hurt workers. You're going to compromise health and safety.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Tell that to Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe North, come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You know what else you're going to do? You're going to put journeypeople out of work because those folks who have been in the field for 30 years, 20 years or more, are going to have to be competing for their jobs on the job, in the field, with apprentices. It's a source of cheap labour. I know where that's coming from, from the speaker; it's coming from the merit shops and the claques that are absolutely antiunion.

I'll say another thing that degrades his argument on the College of Trades and really pushes the Conservatives and the opposition aside in terms of their legitimacy on it, because we know ultimately what they would do when it comes to skilled labour and trades in general in this province. They would dismantle unions and collective bargaining wholeheartedly with right-to-work provisions. It dilutes any of their rationale. It makes them dislocated with the logic. New Democrats—

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** What's your plan? Do you have a plan?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What is our plan? Our plan is to take a reasonable approach, knowing that there are problems. There are problems inherent in the College of Trades that need to be addressed immediately. It's okay to take a balanced approach. There are a lot of things that need work. There are a lot of things in this province that need work and need reform, and we should be constantly reviewing our government agencies and policies that come before the House to ensure that we're doing the best job to make those work efficiently. But we shouldn't take on ideological pursuits, as the member is doing, to be able to appease and appeal to his core constituency, which are mega-multinationals that want cheap labour.

When we talk about small business people who are in the hairdressing sector, that's where New Democrats take a rational approach. We say, "Yeah, you know what? You know what? We understand"—

Interjection.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** The member thinks it's a joke. **Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** No, I think you're a joke.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The member for Simcoe North, this is your bill. You've moved it, you've spoken—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pretty passionate, sir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You had the respect of the House and I can understand you being very passionate, but I would expect you to keep order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay. I'll do my best.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thought the member was an honourable member, but indeed he has proven not to be.

Speaker, I can tell you that we understand where there are areas that need reform. We understand that imposing a fee on a hairdresser who makes \$30,000 a year should not be at the same level as a journeyman electrician who makes in excess of \$130,000 or \$140,000 a year. That's a reasonable, rational, balanced approach. That shouldn't constitute a reason to blow up the entire system of regulatory reform, of advancing the trades in the province of Ontario. That shouldn't be. That should be something that we in this House feel we have the ability, as competent members, to express a rational proposal to fix. I do that to the minister right now; I hope, as I'm speaking to him, that he acknowledges that that is an issue that should be and can be addressed. I hope he does. I think we can do that, but when we take such an erratic, radical approach as the member has, he loses all legitimacy on this argument completely. Now he speaks about—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Can he speak to the bill,

Speaker?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm speaking directly to the bill. He might be offended that I'm talking about how irrational his logic is on it, but when he speaks about some of the stakeholders that have expressed concern, I can tell you, as a member of LIUNA—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** This bill is the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, about the expiry date and abolishing it. It would be nice if the member got back on track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for the point of order. I'm listening very carefully.

The member for Essex.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** I've learned that when you get too underneath their skin, that's the tactic that they approve, so I know that I'm on the right subject here.

As a LIUNA member, I understand exactly that this is turning out to be an opportunity for other unions to embark on a jurisdictional dispute, and I'm very deeply concerned about it. I've expressed my concerns to the minister that this is something that is evolving and we have to get on top of that issue immediately. It's one of the largest problems with the college and something that could spiral out of control, but it's not something that I

feel is insurmountable. Again, as competent, conscientious members of this House, we have to do our due diligence and make those problems clear and find out solutions to address them.

One would be, and I propose to the minister, that the enforcement agents under the College of Trades should be actually the labour folks.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Labour folks.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** They should be through the Ministry of Labour rather than through the College of Trades. These are educated people in terms of the regulations and also educated under collective agreements that should be respected, long-standing collective agreements that deal with various jurisdictions.

Again, I'm passionate about it because I know the ramifications—economic, safety, regulatory and otherwise—of the proposal from the member. Blowing it up completely and putting it back into the purview of the ministry is not an option that should happen. We need to be modern in our approach to apprenticeship programs. Again, to roll the clock back and to throw any regulation out the window or any reform or any promotion of the trades, I think, is disastrous. Again, I am pleased to not support the bill from the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Essex for what was a very informed intervention in this debate. The members opposite laugh because he disagrees with them. He actually stands up for skilled tradespeople each and every day in this Legislature, and he doesn't do it to try to get cheap publicity. He does it because he's trying to find solutions, because this is a very, very important sector in our economy. It's a very important sector for our young people moving forward in our dramatically changing economy. It's something that I know the member opposite and all members on this side of the House feel very strongly about.

I think the member opposite, with this bill—it's just another example of the member moving forward to spread what I would call incorrect information and use that to try to destabilize what apprentices are going through in this province, destabilize the skilled trades at a time when we're trying to build them up. I'm pleased to have the support of the member opposite because this is one of those things we do need to work together on. It shouldn't be a partisan issue. Unfortunately, the folks in the official opposition are making it a partisan issue. So if we have to respond in a partisan way, it's with regret, but I think we need to do that. The fact of the matter is, this member is manufacturing a false crisis around the routine deadline for apprentices to register in the College of Trades. He wrongly and incorrectly says, and has been saying, that 85,000 apprentices are going to be out of work as of April 8. Mr. Speaker, that is just utterly complete nonsense. That simply is not what's going to happen, and he knows that. All he has to do to find out what's going to happen is call Mr. Tsubouchi, who is the head of the College of Trades. He would totally assure the member that that is not the approach that's going to be taken—not at all, Mr. Speaker.

#### 1600

In essence, what his bill does is it guts the revenues required to keep the College of Trades going. At the end of his speech, he made it very clear what his goal is: to gut the College of Trades. The skilled trades have come too far in the last year with the College of Trades to gut it now and go back to the old days that he makes fun of, when decisions at Queen's Park used to be made in the backrooms—yes, I refer to the smoky backrooms of the Albany Club, because we know that in the days when his government was in office, that's how those decisions were being made.

None of us are completely clean on that because in the last 40 years those decisions were made here at Queen's Park, rather than being made by those people who are in the skill trades themselves, those people who really know the skilled trades.

I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, some of us in this room have a little more knowledge than others of the skilled trades. There are members in this room who have been members of the skilled trades—one is waving at me right now—but the fact of the matter is nobody knows more about the skilled trades than skilled tradespeople themselves. It's time for that member to recognize that and stop trying to steal control of those very important decisions that affect the lives of people in the skilled trades and bring it back into the realm of politicians.

Mr. Speaker, all three parties are guilty of this. We did a lousy job through the years of regulating this industry—

# Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You did.

Hon. Brad Duguid: He says that we did. Let's compare records, because the College of Trades, in the short time that they have been in place—just about a year now—within the first six months or so, they reviewed every apprenticeship ratio in this province. Let's think of what the member's party did when they were in office: They reviewed zero apprenticeship ratios—zero. They did nothing. How many ratios did they reduce when they were in office? Well, the same number: zero. The NDP at least reduced one. Since we've been in office, we reduced seven. The College of Trades has reduced 14. That's more than all three parties in this Legislature combined have done, likely, in the last 40 years.

# Ms. Mitzie Hunter: That's progress.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would say they're making progress. I would say they are doing a better job than what we can do here at Queen's Park. I think making those decisions in the light of the public forums that they participate in, with bodies that are actually made up of people from the skilled trades, is a heck of a lot more effective than what the member wants to do, which is to go back to the old days.

I think the fact is that what this bill does is it guts the revenues that keep the College of Trades going. It puts an end to the dream of skilled tradespeople to be able to govern themselves. I don't understand for the life of me

why this member and his party are so against skilled tradespeople having that right to self-govern.

There are 44 other regulatory bodies across this province that govern 44 other professions in this province. They're not going after the teachers—although they often do in other ways. They're not going after social workers, who have their own body. They're not going after the lawyers or the doctors or the nurses or any of the others. They're just going after the skilled tradespeople. Why is that? I have to ask, Mr. Speaker, is it that they think skilled tradespeople just aren't up to the job of governing themselves? Do they think they don't have the capacity to make these decisions regarding their trades? Because it's really bizarre that they don't go after the other regulatory bodies.

They make up all this stuff about membership fees, calling it all kinds of things that it's not, but yet they think it's okay for these other regulatory bodies to have membership fees.

Self-governance is something that, you would think, when you look at the approach that this member has taken—if the College of Trades were to be abolished, all those functions would now have to come back into government. This member's idea is to start a whole brand new ministry to deal with those issues. You know what I call that? I call that tax and spend, because he's going to have to go back to the taxpayers to find money to pay for that. I call that big government. Not that there are any pure socialists in this Legislature anymore, but I would expect that from a socialist MPP. I sure as heck wouldn't be expecting that from a PC member. I can tell you that if you talk to some of your colleagues outside this Legislature who worked in previous governments that were PC governments, if they took a look at what you're trying to do, I think they'd be shaking their heads. In fact, I can tell you they are shaking their heads right now. Their policy makes no sense whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on as well to talk about a few other things. I'm going to leave time for my colleague, because we're running out of time too quickly here

As of April 8—let's be very, very clear; the College of Trades has been very, very clear—apprentices will not be kicked off job sites. They will be encouraged, Mr. Speaker. We'll work with them and they'll work with employers to make sure they get up to compliance so they can be full-fledged members of the College of Trades, a body that's there to protect them, a body that's there to protect consumers and a body that's there to provide them with a voice in their own profession, something they deserve, something I find disgraceful that the member opposite thinks they're not capable of doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm very pleased to rise and stand here today and talk about Bill 169, the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act, introduced by my colleague from

Simcoe North. But before I get started, I want to congratulate him. This member has worked so hard over the last couple of years. He has reached out to so many communities and so many tradespeople. The passion that you're feeling and hearing today in this House is very, very real, because he has listened to the real-life stories. He understands how the College of Trades and the nonsense and layers of bureaucracy are going to negatively impact so many different trades across this province. To the member for Simcoe North I say thank you and don't stop; we're going to see this through to the end.

First of all, we all know why this bill has been introduced: We need to abolish these deadlines in terms of making people pay these fees. I find it interesting that originally the deadline was April 8. Now the government, the College of Trades—whoever—has extended it to July 4. What's July 4, Mr. Speaker? That's Independence Day. Think about the rich irony here: As people are told to conform and comply—I believe the minister's exact words were "get up to compliance"—it's anything but independence.

I think we need to get back to getting out of the way of business doing what they do best, be it an electrician, be it a carpenter, be it a person on a construction site or a hairdresser, for goodness' sake. We need to think about this through and through. We have to think about how

this government is not connecting the dots.

They say they're all about finding jobs for our young people. Mr. Speaker, I want to revisit the fact that last year Ontario's youth unemployment rate was 17.1%. The inability of this minister and this Liberal government to connect the dots and understand the implications of their actions is disturbing. It's important to think about who we're talking about here: saving apprentices' jobs. Generally speaking, the people who would lose jobs because of the College of Trades and the deadlines are our young people, and I want to talk about them for a moment or

I think about Jarris Ireland from Teeswater, Ontario. He's a wonderful, community-minded person who was raised by parents who believe in giving back. He's getting married in December. But guess what? Guess where he has found a job? North of Fort McMurray. He's two weeks in Alberta, one week home. I think about fastforwarding to when he gets married. That's quite a newlywed life he's going to be leading: two weeks in Alberta, one week at home. This is not the Ontario I want to see for our young people.

We are in a desperate shortage of skilled tradespeople. I think about the folks who worked on our house when we renovated it. We have a contractor whose son is very, very skilled in fine carpentry work, and I think about how he would like to share his trade with young people who are coming into the business. But, for goodness' sake, our apprenticeship approach in Ontario under this Liberal government is all wrong, and we need to think about what we need to be doing to get people back to work.

The legislation put forward by my colleague solves some of this problem. It takes some deadlines, some aspects of red tape, if you will, out of the way. We need good, sensible legislation, and I think every member in this House should be supporting the member from Simcoe North.

In closing, I'm just amazed at the costs this Liberal government is willing to impose on all of our small businesses and every aspect of our population, if you will, in terms of trying to pay their way for all their mistakes. The cost of power has hit hard, the increase in the cost of waste management has hit hard, the new WSIB-they just get layered onward and onward. You know what? We have to do better, and we can do better by following the lead from my colleague in Simcoe North and, first of all, abolishing the deadlines-and when we have the honour of forming government under the leadership of Tim Hudak, we'll abolish the College of Trades as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will not be supporting Bill 169, and I have to say, the odium that has been expressed by the member from Simcoe North is, to me, unpleasant, and I believe it's unbecoming of this member; I really do. I understand the strong feelings he has, but the language, in my view, is unpleasant and unbecoming.

When he refers to inspectors as "thugs," I understand what he's saying, but I just think that he should find an appropriate language to deal with his disagreement. This is strong stuff. People are doing their jobs. He might disagree with that, but to refer to them as "thugs" is

simply inappropriate.

His bill essentially removes the requirement that apprentices become fee-paying members of the College of Trades. This bill is connected to their desire to get rid of the College of Trades. The member from Simcoe North has spoken to that. All of the party members speak to this on a regular basis, and we know where they're coming from.

I have to say, as a member who was sitting on those committees when we were dealing with this, that the government is simply not very good at doing this job. It was very clear, when we were doing that, that the ministry of post-secondary education was simply not the place to handle this and that a College of Trades, in my mind, was the better place to deal with the trades. Are you going to have problems? Inevitably. Are some problems solvable? I think they are.

But what I think it does-which I believe is very important—is play a role in enforcing trade standards for consumers, and it will act as a disciplinary body for the tradespeople who have consistently violated industry standards. And, in addition, consumers will be able to lodge a complaint with the college if they feel work done for them did not meet acceptable standards.

I've had to deal with a problem. I had Homeservice Club of Ontario come to do a job at our house. I'm telling you it was a disaster. We paid \$17,000, and it was a disaster. I complained to them. I sent them a letter. I even told them who I was. It had no effect whatsoever. They didn't even reply.

They in fact sent somebody to the house. The person who went to do the investigation agreed that the work that was done was not appropriate to the standards. I wrote them a letter asking, "Where are we with this?" They haven't even replied.

Where do you go? Where does a consumer go? This College of Trades would allow them to do that.

Interiections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Now, should we look at, member from Simcoe North—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Should we review this in a way that—I think we can be reasonable. I think the College of Trades should look upon hairdressers a little differently than many others. Most of these folks who work in this trade are women, and they have skill, no doubt. Is that one group that we might look at differently than the rest of the trades? I would argue, from a personal point of view, yes. Are the fees, in some cases, for some people, too high? I would say yes. Should we be looking at some of these things? I argue with the minister—who is inattentive at the moment—that they should be looking at these matters. But I believe we're on the right track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

**Ms. Soo Wong:** Before I begin my remarks about Bill 169, I want to acknowledge the visitors who are here from the skilled trades to witness today's debate on the member opposite's Bill 169.

Let me begin by sharing with the members here the history of apprenticeship. It started back in the 1920s, when Ontario became the first province in Canada to introduce a statutory-based apprenticeship program. In the same vein, our province is now leading the way when it became the first jurisdiction in North America to have a College of Trades.

In 1944, by request of management and labour representatives, the automotive repair industry asked for compulsory certification when it came to motor vehicle repair. Then, in 1958, then-Premier Leslie Frost required compulsory certification for those in the trade of hair-dresser. Then, in 1963, then-Premier John Robarts required compulsory certification for the trade of barber. So there has been a long-standing history that progressive Premiers have created some trade requirements and certification.

When the member opposite from Simcoe North continuously attacks the College of Trades this afternoon, I want to remind him that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Thornhill, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock were all previously members of a professional regulatory body. No professional regulatory body can say that a membership fee is a tax. Let that be on the table, because that kind of language is inflammatory. It's pretty unacceptable.

I want to also share that Mr. Bill Nicholls, president of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, said, "Calling a membership fee a 'tax grab' is intentionally misleading: membership fees will apply to members of the college, not taxpayers."

When the member from Simcoe North speaks about this bill, I get his passion and his commitment to ensuring that the College of Trades is fair and, as well, is supporting the community. Let me also remind the member that all self-regulating bodies are there to protect the public.

As a member of the College of Nurses for almost 30 years, I would like to believe that the College of Nurses' first and utmost responsibility is to ensure that the health care being delivered in this province is safe and that the consumer—in this case, the patient and the family—has been protected. For the member to say that the essence of the College of Trades' membership fee is a tax is absolutely not correct, so I want to remind him as well.

I want to also acknowledge the minister's comment earlier. The member opposite is trying to create a crisis. We know what happened when the previous Conservative government tried to create a crisis when it comes to public education. Fear-mongering is not the right way to do it. If you want to debate an issue based on facts, I'm happy to do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and add to this lively debate on Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. Before I begin my remarks, I just want to take a moment to thank our member from Simcoe North for his tireless efforts to help the workers who are being exploited by this new bureaucracy, the Ontario College of Trades.

This bill is an example of trying to make a minority government work, and I applaud the member for that. Our preference would be to scrap the College of Trades altogether. I know I have had many constituents come to me, asking me, almost pleading with me, to see it scrapped. I have sat in on very lively, heated meetings where these tradespeople are extremely upset at what the College of Trades is imposing upon them.

The member from Simcoe North has introduced this bill to save the jobs of tens of thousands of workers here in the province of Ontario. The College of Trades, in a nutshell, demands that workers from across the province pay up to the provincial government, or else they will no longer be certified to do the job they're already doing. It doesn't matter if you're a barber who has been working for decades, or a baker or a carpenter. You have to pay up.

Section 90 of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act states that all apprentices in Ontario who signed an agreement prior to the college's inception would be deemed members of the college for one year. That deadline is fast approaching, and there are still an estimated 85,000 apprentices who need to renew their memberships. If the deadline passes and the apprentices have not paid their membership fees, this will have disastrous consequences.

Clive Thurston, President of the Ontario General Contractors Association, said in a press release: "Our members are being notified by the college to stop training their apprentices on April 8. They have a mandate to promote the trades; instead, they are destroying them."

These apprentices are honest, hard-working people who are simply trying to make a living and to do some valuable work in their communities. They do not take kindly to the government dipping into their wallets for a little more cash, and they certainly don't appreciate being told that they're working illegally.

Let's get this bill past second reading today. If they want to put it in a committee and they want to make amendments to it, let's make it happen. Right now, the way this bill is, it's going to cost the residents, people who want to do home renovations, where they would just perhaps hire a handyperson to come and do the work—now, under this, they would have to hire a carpenter, an electrician, a drywaller, a painter, a floor installer. It goes on and on and on. That's going to cost Ontario taxpayers, the residents of this great province, a lot more money.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to the passing of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I'm pleased to stand here today to commend the member from Simcoe North on his leadership and support for the hard-working tradespeople of our province.

The College of Trades is nothing more than another costly layer of bureaucracy put in place by this Liberal government as a reward for generous Liberal donations. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to withdraw. It's an insinuation.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw. Speaker, my riding— The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I asked you to withdraw.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I did.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I didn't hear you.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, businesses are struggling to survive the heavy burden of obscene electricity rates, high payroll and property taxes.

Chris the Barber, a small business in Glen Walter, took up the fight on what is just another excessive tax increase. He saw his trade licensing fee go from \$20 to over \$135 per year, a 600% increase. What does that get for him? Nothing—nothing but inspectors coming in, harassing and threatening to close his small business, a long-standing, popular barbershop that was started by his father, Gilles, decades ago.

But there's more to the story. When Chris took up the fight against the unreasonable tax increase, he was visited

by a number of thugs. They told him that they didn't want to see him in the newspapers anymore, or else.

So let's take a minute and just think about this serious act of intimidation. Why would members of a large provincial union show up to threaten a small one-person business? What's in it for them? What benefits would this Liberal government agency provide a union, for them to send in the goons? It's amazing this would happen in today's Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm wondering what's in it for them. What benefits would this Liberal government agency provide such a union for them to send in the goons? It's amazing that this would happen in Ontario.

Then there's Earl Leger in my riding, a hard-working tradesman who was pleased to see his son, Devon, follow in his footsteps and join the skilled trades as an apprentice. Despite the lack of skilled jobs in the province, Devon found employment in Kingston after a long job hunt. However, Devon will lose his job for no other reason than this government's job-killing policies. The College of Trades is challenging the validity of regular trade licences. Even though his employer is happy with Devon's job performance, they will be forced to terminate him due to the College of Trades job-killing regulations.

I'll leave some time for my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I just want to put on the record, first of all, that the member for Simcoe North has worked hard on this. He's a skilled tradesperson. He knows of what he speaks. He's trying to protect the jobs that he knows built this province.

I first heard about this from my barber quite a few months ago, and I wrote to the ministry. I have still had no response to it. My barber has been barbering for 30 years, and he was told he had to get the certificate. In the same barbershop, Dave Bryant's daughter actually cuts hair. She's a hairdresser as well. He cannot and does not intend to do anything more than give you a decent haircut. Mine is perfect, for example. I still have hair, which is a good thing. He does not do hairdressing, but he does shave customers occasionally, if asked. But his daughter can do all the other things.

This is an example of a father and a daughter creating their own jobs, and you're threatening them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There's a lot of folks standing around having conversations. I'd ask you to take them outside.

The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the member from Essex, the minister and the members from Huron-Bruce, Trinity-Spadina, Scarborough-Agincourt, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Durham for their feedback. In the end, I guess I'm happy that the third

party, the farm club of the Liberals, is actually supporting them on this.

Interjections.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** How much more pathetic could it be than some of the comments we heard?

The minister never did say how many apprentices are going to lose their jobs, and he will not explain the letter. Why did the ministry send the letter out to all the employers? Why would they do that? Did they just do it as a joke? Have they got nothing better to do than send out threatening letters to employers? He never explained that. He said, "Call Dave Tsubouchi." He knows a lot about all the details, but he knows nothing about this. Shame on you for that little, stupid comment.

I am a tradesperson. I know a little bit about this. I've worked with tradespeople for 20 years of my life. I know there's not a lot of you in this House; I know that's the case. But I am passionate about this. I've been around. I've been at about 150 locations. I've actually put two documents out: this one to the Canadian Contractors Association—I'll give one to the minister if he wants to read it sometime; he may learn something from it—and this one on all the tradespeople. This one abolishes the College of Trades; they both do.

We all know it came as a result of the Working Families coalition. Let's get to the point here: That's what it's all about. It's payback time. They want it to go through.

But it's not payback time with Tim Hudak and the PC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdraw.

It's not payback time for us. But I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker: When we get elected, we will abolish the Ontario College of Trades.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1630

# BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ADVERTISING ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ DES ORGANISMES DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 134, An Act respecting broader public sector advertising.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a bunch of noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j)—Mr. Bisson?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I refer the matter to the regulations and private bills committee.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Mr. Bisson wishes it to be referred to the regulations and private bills committee. Agreed? Agreed.

# PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

# LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 174, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye." All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—Mr. Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to refer it to the committee on finance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the committee on finance. Agreed? Agreed.

# SAVING APPRENTICES' JOBS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 POUR LA SAUVEGARDE DES EMPLOIS POUR APPRENTIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "ave."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay." In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell. *The division bells rang from 1632 to 1637.* 

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask all members to take their seats.

Mr. Dunlop has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

### Ayes

Arnott, Ted Bailey, Robert Barrett, Toby Chudleigh, Ted Clark, Steve Jackson, Rod Jones, Sylvia Klees, Frank Leone, Rob MacLaren, Jack Munro, Julia Nicholls, Rick O'Toole, John Ouellette, Jerry J. Scott, Laurie Dunlop, Garfield Fedeli, Victor Hardeman, Ernie Harris, Michael Hillier, Randy Holyday, Douglas C Martow, Gila McDonell, Jim McKenna, Jane McNaughton, Monte Miller, Norm Milligan, Rob E. Smith, Todd Thompson, Lisa M. Walker, Bill Wilson, Jim Yakabuski, John Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

### Nays

Albanese, Laura Armstrong, Teresa J. Berardinetti, Lorenzo Bisson, Gilles Bradley, James J Campbell, Sarah Cansfield, Donna H. Chan Michael Chiarelli, Bob Colle, Mike Coteau, Michael Damerla, Dipika Del Duca, Steven Delaney, Bob Dhillon, Vic Dickson, Joe

DiNovo, Cheri Duguid, Brad Fife, Catherine Flynn, Kevin Daniel Forster, Cindy Gates, Wayne Haffield, Percy Hoskins, Eric Hunter, Mitzie Jaczek, Helena Kwinter, Monte Leal, Jeff Mangat, Amrit Mantha Michael

Marchese, Rosario McNeely, Phil Miller, Paul Milloy, John Moridi, Reza Murray, Glen R. Natyshak, Taras Prue, Michael Qaadri, Shafiq Sandals, Liz Sattler, Peggy Singh, Jagmeet Tabuns, Peter Vanthof, John Wong, Soo Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 46.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATIONS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DON DE SANG VOLONTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely / Projet de loi 178, Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When this item was last debated, the member for Nickel Belt had the floor, with six minutes and 59 seconds remaining.

Further debate? The member for Timmins—James Bay. Ms. Cindy Forster: A point of order, Speaker.

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I'd like to introduce a co-op student who is volunteering in my office. She's here today in the members' gallery. Her name is Danielle Penney. She's actually from the WillowWood School, and she's from the Willowdale riding. I'd like to welcome her to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Now we'll recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I want to speak in favour of this particular legislation, but there are a few things that I'd like to put on the record.

First of all, as we all know, the government has been faced with this situation since about November 2012. I guess the question that we all have to ask ourselves is, why has the government waited until now to bring legislation forward to deal with this and to put themselves into this somewhat of a bind of having to pass legislation before the summer?

I just want to say at the outset that we will support this legislation and look forward for it to be out of second reading and into committee and back for a vote sometime this spring. But I think it's important—we've only had about an hour and a bit of debate—that we have an opportunity, as all members in this House do, to be able to put a couple of things on the record.

Let's take a look at where we're at. The rules currently don't have an explicit omission as to allowing people to pay for blood plasma products. That's something that has existed for a long time. It has never really been an issue, because of the way our blood collection system in this country and in this province has been run over the years.

But back a few years ago, a company made an application in order to be able to start blood plasma clinics in Toronto—two, specifically—and, in their application, said that they wanted to pay people \$20 per donation when they're donating blood. Obviously, that's something that is troubling, because within our system, as we understand it in Canada, we have never accepted that you pay somebody for donating blood. There are all kinds of reasons why, and I'll let other people speak to that.

Here we were in November 2012, faced with this particular situation. The government, for whatever reason, did not introduce a bill in this House. I know that our colleague, the critic for health, the member from Nickel Belt, had raised on a number of occasions, both by way of questions in the House and discussions that she had with the minister, why it was that the government needed to do this, and certainly had indicated the support of our party, the New Democratic Party of Ontario, in moving forward in order to ban this by putting in an explicit restriction for the payment for blood when it comes to donations in the province of Ontario.

But for whatever reason, the government didn't do so and sort of dragged its feet until the last hour. It really makes you wonder what the government was up to. Were they thinking that maybe this is a good idea? Was it a question that they couldn't get their act together? Was it a question that the minister had too many things on her plate? You pick, but for whatever reason, we find ourselves in this particular situation. Clearly, there needs to be something done in order to make sure that should these clinics try to collect money for the collection of blood, they not be allowed to do so.

I wanted to speak to this, also, from the perspective of safety because there has been, as we all know, a huge change to our blood collection system as a result of some things that have happened in the past.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would ask you guys to take it outside if you are going to carry on like that.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

As I was saying, we have undergone a humongous change within our country in regards to our blood product services, when it comes to the collection of blood products in this country, because of a tragedy that happened some years ago. I wanted to take an opportunity to speak to that particular part of it because I think in all of our constituencies we've dealt with people who got tainted blood and unfortunately are very sick today—and a number of them are no longer here.

I can think of a number of constituents I had to deal with. Isidore Kingsbury is an example of one who got tainted blood some years ago as a result of a condition that he had where he was in need of blood. Unfortunately, he got a disease from the donated blood that eventually led to his early death. I can tell you, from the perspective of the family and friends of this particular gentleman, it was quite a trying thing. Imagine finding yourself in a position where you go into the hospital for something that's routine, you get some blood and the next thing you know you've got a life-threatening disease as a result of that particular infusion. He, along with many other Canadians, struggled for a long time for it at least to be recognized that it was as a result of the tainted blood that they got those diseases, and that some form of compensation be paid.

Unfortunately, a lot of the victims who were affected by that were never properly compensated. Now they or their families are having to live with the consequence of that, because in many cases these were hard-working individuals in our communities who had good jobs, who were making a living. They were paying their bills. They were raising their families and doing the things that are all part of life. All of a sudden, because of their illness, they were not able to work anymore, and were really thrown into a really bad financial situation as a result of contracting the disease. I still deal with, today, people in my constituency who have been affected by that particular scandal and, either they or their survivors, are really in a bad place when it comes to their survivivability, when it comes to the economics of the situation.

I know this is not a bill by which we are going to be able to fix that, but I think we still need to remember that there are plenty of victims still out there who are suffering from these diseases, and others—many of them—who find themselves in a very bad spot financially as a result of what happened to them. I think to have this kind of debate in the House and not have an opportunity to remember all of those who were affected would be unfair. That's why I wanted to put that on the record.

I also want to say that I am heartened by the changes that we have made to our blood collection system in this province and in this country. We are now doing a much better job than we did before of screening blood that comes from volunteers, in order to make sure that the blood is not tainted with some kind of disease that could lead to somebody's illness or possibly death.

I think the good story out of all of that is that we learned from our mistakes. I think a society marks itself, when there is something wrong that goes on, by what we are prepared to do to fix it. In this particular case, we've gone a long way to try to address what were the failures in the system that did put us in this situation of many people having died, or getting a disease, as a result of tainted blood.

Now we find ourselves at this juncture where there is an application in order to collect blood and to pay people for the donation of that blood, at \$20 per donation. I've just got to say that I don't think that sits well with most of us. I would expect that this Legislature will vote to support this bill for the reasons that we all understand.

I do want to point out one part of the bill that needs to be verified in committee. By my read of it, I think we're okay, but I think it's something we need to take a look at, and that is the import of blood plasma products from jurisdictions such as the United States where blood is collected and a fee is paid. In my read of the legislation, it looks like that's covered, but I think we need to make sure that we double check that, because we don't want to have a situation where we in our province have a policy where we say, "You will not pay people to donate blood," and then allow by the back door, through imports from other jurisdictions, blood to come in that may very well have been gathered by the payment of money to a volunteer.

Unfortunately, far too often, those people who tend to be attracted to giving that blood are those people at the lower end of the economic scale, and I think it speaks volumes in a negative way if somebody really wants to collect blood by that means. I think we need to make sure that the legislation as it stands is clear that imports of blood from those jurisdictions are treated in the same way as the blood that will be collected here in the province of Ontario.

I don't have much more to say. We don't plan on keeping this going for many days. I think we have a number of members—there's probably just about an hour left today, so we'll take an opportunity to speak to the issue as we see it. I think members of our caucus, as well as members of other caucuses, have things that they want to say about this. Like I say, at this point, we've only spoken to this particular bill for about an hour and a half. We have another hour coming up this afternoon. I would expect that other members want to speak to this so that we can put on the record what we think are the strengths and the weaknesses of this bill and, in our case, as New Democrats speak to the general support of what is being attempted.

I just end on the point that I started with: Where have you been since 2012? The government had ample opportunity to bring legislation to this House. For whatever reason, the government decided not to. I think that's too bad, but let's deal with it the best that we can, and we'll see where all of this leads in a very short time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I enjoyed listening to the comments from my colleague the House leader from the New Democratic Party. I really want to pick up on a few points that he raised. First of all, the personal side of this: I think all of us, as members of the Legislature, as individuals, have encountered people who, due to their exposure to tainted blood, as it's called, have experienced just horrific consequences—particularly when you think back to what happened around the time of the Krever inquiry. Any piece of legislation that's about the blood supply system is very much about individuals and protecting them and public safety.

The bill that is before us, just to give a little bit of background—I think people are aware of the basics of it—if passed, would:

--prohibit paying donors for blood and blood plasma products;

—prohibit payments to individuals for their blood and plasma, including reimbursement of expenses or other forms of compensation;

—strengthen the government's enforcement powers in the case of violations; and

—expand the criteria considered for licensing blood collection facilities to ensure the public interest is upheld.

That's what it's about, Mr. Speaker—very much along the line of public interest. I welcome the positive comments from the House leader of the third party. I appreciate and respect the fact that there are members of that caucus who wish to put ideas or comments on the record.

But at the same time, he raised a number of technical points. I know that, in casual conversation, members on the other side have asked me about technical aspects of the bill. That's why we're urging members, if we can, to bring this stage of debate to a close so that it can go to committee so that some of these technical matters can be addressed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I recall the opening remarks, leadoff speeches, made by our critic, Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby—Oshawa—a very principled person—and the very respectable comments that she made, not just about the Krever commission, but about some of the work she has done on select committees, and how important this is after the tainted blood scandal. Of course, the member from Nickel Belt as well, who is the critic for the NDP—both are highly respected and committed to doing the right thing in a policy sense.

I suspect that this bill will go to committee, where it should go. There are a lot of technical components to it, especially the part amending the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act. Gerard Kennedy is one of the lobbyists—a former member here—going around and saying, "What's going to happen to these collection centres?" A pretty ordinary fine protocol here.

The plasma issue versus the straight blood issue needs to be clarified, as well. I think it's important.

I hope the NDP don't put up too many more speakers this afternoon out of co-operation. Our House leader, Jim Wilson, and Christine Elliott have made it clear that we would like to see it go to committee. If you would like not to speak anymore, that would help me. If not, then we'll rag the puck as much as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is always a pleasure to comment on some of the remarks that the member from Timmins–James Bay makes on any issue. This issue in particular, though, I know resonates very personally with him, and I think it actually resonates very well with our entire party.

As he mentioned, the member from Nickel Belt has been raising the issue of for-profit blood donations for a number of years. One of my first press conferences that I ever attended at this House had to do with the member from Nickel Belt bringing forward some victims of the for-profit blood donation process, and the negative effect that it had on their lives. That trickle-out effect, which is negative, has consequences not only for people emotionally and for their ability to participate in society but on the health care system as a whole.

I do share his concerns as to why it has taken so long for this government to bring forward this piece of legislation. Of course, we are going to support it, but I think he offered some very salient points and cautionary points as to how we should make sure this system is indeed created, monitored and implemented with the best interests of the citizens of this province in mind. There are some red flags going forward.

I am looking forward to the debate. I don't understand fully the criticism that the member has mentioned with regard to putting up speakers. It has taken a long time for this legislation to come to this place in this House in the history of this province. We have every intention of speaking to it and bringing forward the concerns of the constituents which we represent.

I fully support the comments made by the member from Timmins-James Bay, and I look forward to a full hour, or more, of debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: We support Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. It's extremely important. As you could rightly expect, health care is amongst the most regulated of professions. I myself, for example, am a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Ontario Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Protective Association. Why is there so much oversight in the health care space? Because this is the most precious thing that we have.

When we have for-profit or monetary compensation for any kind of service of this nature, I think we're going down the wrong pathway. You don't need to go too far 3 AVRIL 2014

out of the jurisdiction of Ontario to find, for example, facilities which will pay you for a lot more than just blood; they'll pay you even for organs: for kidneys—or, by the way, surrogate motherhood, and so on. This is probably not really the pathway that we in Ontario need to go down, especially when we as the governing party believe so strongly that our public, high-quality health care system is one of our most precious gifts that we give as a legacy to future generations.

I have to say as well that part of the reason I cite all these regulations and the kind of oversight that is brought to bear in the health care space is that I'm slightly appalled that there are institutions—for example, this company that has been cited in this legislation—that are essentially acting as quasi-medical laboratories and specimen collection centres, basically as a free-for-all. That is absolutely a regulated act. That is absolutely something that needs the scrutiny of the Ministry of Health and the government of Ontario. Whether it's storage of the materials that they collect, the needles that are used, the hygiene, the potential spread of blood-borne illnesses, and so on—the list is endless, as you can imagine, from a physician's point of view.

Let's get this to committee. Let's support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timmins-James Bay, you have two minutes.

1700

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank everybody who commented. I just want to say: We as New Democrats support this bill. We have no intention of prolonging the debate. The bill has seen, I think, about an hour and 20 minutes worth of debate as of the beginning of today, and there was only about an hour and 15 minutes left in the day when we started this. We saw this as an opportunity to get some people on the record to speak to some of the very real issues that have happened with our blood collection system.

As I explained earlier, it's not just a question of what's in this bill but it's also a question of what we have learned from the tragedies of the past when it comes to the blood collection system. I think we owe it to those victims who unfortunately were diseased and died because of tainted blood that we take this moment to recognize what happened to these people and what continues to happen today to them and their families—not being properly compensated, and as a result, they're in a pretty bad spot.

Like I say, I can think of about three or four people who I've dealt with—there's more than that, but I can think of about three or four right now—who are diseased. I know at least two of them are dead; the other ones are still alive. But they're not able to work, and the ones who died were not able to work, either. They just lost everything. They lost their houses; they had to spend their RRSPs. They were left absolutely penniless by the time they died, these two particular individuals I know of. Then their widows and their families were left to hold the pieces.

It was actually a very tragic story in Ontario's and Canada's history of what we had thought was a good blood collection system. I think we owe it to the victims who suffered as a result of this to in fact take a moment to recognize what happened to them and to speak to why we think this bill is a good thing and needs to move forward. But we have no intention of holding this up for a long time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm actually very grateful for the opportunity to speak on Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, this afternoon. I do think it's important to set some context for the debate and also to acknowledge the current weaknesses in the system as it stands in the province of Ontario.

I think it's important to acknowledge that voluntary blood donors give blood, plasma or cellular components for altruistic reasons, and that should be the fundamental driver for all donations as we go forward. As the representative of my community of Kitchener-Waterloo, I feel responsible for and dedicated to preserving the health and the safety of the people that I serve and Ontarians, more broadly. I think actually this would be a shared interest that we all have. If I were to ask all of you for your reason for becoming an MPP, for putting your name on the ballot, for taking time away from your family and for taking on the journey of politics in the province of Ontario, I'm sure that an overwhelming majority of you would respond with some sort of version of wanting to help others.

With these goals of public service in mind, I'm deeply concerned that it has taken this long for the Liberal government to address for-profit plasma clinics, though it has been clear for a number of years that there was a danger of a for-profit market emerging. All of us know this, and this is an issue in all of our ridings, and it is not an issue that has been well hidden. It is an issue that has been in the forefront. So it is very timely that we are here this afternoon. The government should have addressed this issue sooner and put more protections in place for the people of Ontario when the threat emerged. The dangers related to for-profit clinics are finally coming far too close to being realized.

Though the Liberal government blames their lack of initiative on the federal government—which is obviously an emerging theme with this government, pointing the finger at the federal government—it was actually in 1997 that the federal government adopted the perspective from the Krever commission report into the tainted blood scandal that provinces should decide the legality of blood products on their own. This is a provincial responsibility.

Since 1997, it was apparent that the Ontario government would have had to make a decision on their own, yet consecutive governments have failed to address this issue. It is 17 years later, and by now, we should have had a strategy in place to reconcile the province's demand for blood products with the need to protect the public from the painful mistakes we made in the past.

We are not even sure if the government will be able to prevent the for-profit clinics from buying plasma or beginning operations, so this is an outstanding question with regard to Bill 178. Our party does support this bill, but I must say that I am disturbed that it has taken the governing party to do their job, provide governance and leadership on issues which are critical to the life and safety of Ontarians.

The Liberals were aware that there was no legislation in place which would have allowed or empowered the Ministry of Health to decline the application of for-profit clinics for licence. This is well documented. The government ignored advice from our party and from the public health care officials on this issue, and now we have to play catch-up and try to clean up the mess that Ontario is now in.

For me, this sounds somewhat perhaps like a campaign slogan, but I'm just going off-script a little.

Other provinces have already acted on this issue. Héma-Québec, the equivalent of the Red Cross in this province, said they would not consider the using of forprofit methods of acquiring plasma. The World Health Organization has also stated that its goal is to move to a donation-only model by the year 2020. The federal drug administration supports the donation-only model. Canadian Blood Services has expressed concern with a forprofit scheme.

I have a very good working relationship with my local Canadian Blood Services chapter. In fact, we had a blood donation drive through our office just before Christmas. I was really encouraged to see the way that Canadian Blood Services is soliciting and encouraging, motivating and inspiring people to donate blood. That day, 17 new donors came from a call through our office locally in Kitchener-Waterloo. There were several companies-Sun Life was there. I think Communitech was there. There were companies who were saying to their employees, "This matters to us." I think it was a sign of corporate leadership: that they were endeavouring to inspire their employees to give something that is in them to give. There was great networking that day. It's one of those experiences that, as a new MPP—to inspire 17 new donors to come forward, network and bond and actually just give; do something good. It was just a very positive experience. I think that's how we should see blood and plasma donation.

Considering that concern about for-profit clinics is so widespread, especially within trusted and knowledgeable organizations, it is difficult to understand why the Liberal government has delayed acting on this issue for so long. It is clear from the experiences of other countries who have attempted pay-for-plasma schemes that it is not a safe or an effective method of growing the blood supply. It is neither beneficial for those people who are selling their blood nor those patients who will receive it.

The clinics would rely on those members of our community in particular who are low-income and need the money. This puts those people in vulnerable positions and promotes a system relationship in which the individuals become reliant on the funds available at the forprofit centre. Paying people for their blood would deter those who currently donate from donating in the future.

I know that there is some sort of debate about this and there are some questions about it, but I think the research and evidence that we have within our grasp as policy-makers should guide us going forward. We want and need younger members of our community to donate blood, and the existence of for-profit clinics poses a significant threat to their donations and involvement.

I think what we are ultimately talking about in this House is shifting the culture around blood and plasma donation. I think that Canadian Blood Services has done an amazing job of advocating and promoting what we all have within us to give. I'm proud to say that I am a blood donor. I have my little badge of honour that they give you every time you donate 10 times. I think that the entire culture around blood and plasma donation is shifting. In many respects, that sector is well ahead of this Legislature, but it still remains to be seen and it still remains to be supported—a piece of legislation which protects the not-for-profit donation system.

Private clinics do not have the same high level of oversight that exists in the current publicly funded system. I am concerned that the plan for blood collected from the clinic is to sell the plasma to manufacturers, who would then turn the raw product into medications such as albumins to treat burn victims and immoglobulins to treat immune disorders. Clearly, there is a reason why I am not in the medical field because I cannot pronounce some of the language.

Ontario should not resort to a for-profit system, but should find other ways to create a sustainable donation-based system. To date, 54 countries, including resource-limited countries and not First World countries or even Second World countries, have achieved a national blood supply based on 100% voluntary donation. I do believe that we can achieve this in Canada and in Ontario. I do think that there have been some well-documented studies that point to where the public is best served by the not-for-profit model. That should be the direction that we should invest some of our energy in.

When I think of the for-profit model, I automatically go to the child care sector, where study after study questions the quality of the care. It's the same principle. You want to invest your energy and your finances, and certainly the legislation should be guided by the best practices that we know of. We have seen example after example—for instance in child care—of where the focus is on making money; that's where the money goes, towards the profit margin, versus the notfor-profit model, where the funding that is invested in the child care centre goes towards better-quality food, better-quality staff, supporting a model which is very much focused on securing an environment which benefits those children. I see the for-profit model very much pitted against the best interests of the people of this province.

The minister has not been clear on her directive to address this issue. I think that is an important piece. I

know that there has been some catching up on her part with regard to this piece of legislation. I was watching a scrum not that long ago where she was called out on it. If we can move this forward very quickly, I think we would absolutely be very supportive of that, because it has been a long time coming. At the time when the Minister of Health was questioned on her directive to address this issue, she suggested that Canadian Plasma Resources is covered by the existing legislation to regulate labs under the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act. However, Bill 178 includes amendments to this act and this legislation which would bring CPR under its rule. If Canadian Plasma Resources was already governed by this licensing act, then why were the changes needed? This is an outstanding question that we have to face.

I do, of course, want to speak in support of the bill. Obviously, we have wanted this to happen for quite some time. I urge haste and I think that there is a need to accelerate it in many respects, though I am disappointed it has taken this long. I will ask the government to hasten in creating a strategy for addressing our donation-based system and promote sustainability for the future.

I would like to also cite that there are several sources out there who have recognized that Ontario is quite far behind, that we have fallen behind on this file. For some reason, it just has not been a pressing issue for this government. There was a recent article in the Toronto Star, March 20, by Nicholas Keung. He said that "A proposed ban on paid blood donations is dangerously late now that a pay-for-plasma clinic has opened in Ontario...." This is a very key piece. This is actually what happened to some degree in the child care sector. As soon as for-profit commercial centres broke into this market, if you will-if you think that children should be considered in a market—as soon as that precedent has been set, then it's hard to pull back on it. It's hard to reverse that train out of the station. Opposition parties said, after Health Minister Matthews introduced legislation Thursday, that indeed we are struggling with the logistics of reversing the commercialization of blood products.

There is obviously a need to shift the culture around blood donation. There have been missed opportunities, I believe, throughout the education system and in the health care system. I do applaud the current health care profession for promoting blood donation and plasma donation—as I said, I am a donor.

It's very similar, in many respects, to the issue of organ donation. I think, for some reason, that paying for blood or plasma is more appetizing or has a better feel to it than paying for organ donation, but really, the principles are very similar. Once you introduce money or finances into that relationship, into that negotiation and that bargaining, it changes the very principle of the original discussion.

I think we should all be more concerned around the overall health of all patients. All of us have seen the commercials, I hope: With every donation that you do

give, it takes five or six donations to potentially save a patient during a cancer treatment or during a severe car accident. It is something we should all be promoting as individual MPPs. If we all had a blood donation drive, as I did in my riding just before Christmas, we could make an impact on the levels of donation across the province, and we would be shifting that culture that I've been speaking about.

The World Health Organization and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have already developed a framework for global action to achieve 100% voluntary blood donation in every country, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel here. We have to put a piece of legislation in place, and we have to leave some room for a little bit of creativity and some local leadership, but this is not something that we have to start from ground zero on. We can follow the lead of other jurisdictions, other countries that have embraced, if you will, this new culture of donating blood on a regular basis and motivating people to be part of something that genuinely just feels very good.

The issue around blood donors and creating blood donors and recognizing blood donors potentially as a provincial resource is that blood donors give blood, plasma or cellular components for altruistic reasons; that's how I started my short comments here. They receive no payment for it, in cash or in kind. There is nothing else that motivates them to make the donation other than the fact that they understand they are being part of something which is good, which is altruistic, which has a benefit to their fellow human beings.

When you talk about some of the payments that people may get, this also includes time off work, other than that reasonably needed for the donation and travel. When I cited those corporations in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo who inspired blood donation, that was actually part of the equation. I think they were inspiring their employees and sort of rewarding that great behaviour by having a little bit of time off.

More importantly, it doesn't take that long. That's the important piece. You can give a pint of blood in 10 minutes, and they give you a coffee, they give you a juice. It's a lot better than some places where you show up. Certainly, there are good reasons more than altruistic reasons. There are financial, economic impacts on the overall health care system for us to inspire blood and plasma donation and to shift that culture to recognize it.

While it has taken the Liberal government a long, long time to bring Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, to this Legislature, it does, in fact, have the full support of New Democrats. While we certainly hoped it might come to this House a little bit sooner, we are looking forward to supporting it in its entirety, getting it to committee, listening to those informed voices across the province who share some of our concerns and perhaps making some amendments to make it better.

That's in keeping with what we try to do here, day in and day out. We come to work. We try to make legislation stronger so it serves the needs of the people of this province. We're very proud of that, and we will continue to do that kind of work.

1720

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time to address Bill 178. I look forward to comments and the future debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm hoping we can get this through. I'm not hearing a lot of new news on this. As much as I enjoy the comments of my colleagues, I do think this is time-sensitive. There's this point that somehow the government has been dragging its feet on this. No one realistically anticipated this was going to be an issue because the licensing requirements in Ontario prohibited it. I knew this somewhat first-hand because I was involved on the front lines of the AIDS/HIV issue in my life. I quit my job to work without pay in this field.

The member from Timmins-James Bay made some very good points. I just want to endorse them with a great deal of sensitivity. He pointed out the challenges of the Krever inquiry, another part of my life because I was a witness for several days at the Krever inquiry because we ran the first "don't donate" blood drive. As much as that is a great passion of mine, because I lost almost all my friends when I turned 30—my address book was devoid of any name that wasn't crossed out. I don't have witnesses to most of my younger life because they've all died. I feel this incredible responsibility to continue to be a witness to a whole generation of young, particularly gay, men who lost their lives. At that time, the thenhealth minister, Jake Epp, declared that this was a moral issue, not a health issue, in the 1980s, and would not fund it. Those are real issues.

I would say this to the member of Kitchener-Water-loo: This is something we should expedite. Governments deal with complex issues. We can't anticipate every technical thing that some business or someone could use. This bill is about something very simple: It's about protecting voluntary blood donations, and that's very, very important. There really aren't safety issues here because of the reforms of the Krever inquiry.

What I'd like to do is get Bill 173 passed because people are actually dying because we don't have proper dooring legislation, and because we need the one-metre rule and we've got to deal with distracted driving. Those are the legislative priorities that we should bring forward. We shouldn't be dragging our feet on those, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always interesting listening to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I was very optimistic when I was listening to her. She was talking about the celebration of giving the gift that we all have to give, giving blood, and her experience with corporations encouraging their employees to be good citizens. I commend her for having that kind of positive attitude.

This bill itself is one more example of a government that—I like to review things every once in a while, so

I've picked up this, Speaker. I'll send you a copy, if you wish. It says, "30 Years of Health Care Dysfunction." There's a lot of work to be done in health care. I've got a constituent of mine who has idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. We can't even get the drug.

We support this bill. Our critic, Christine Elliott, made it very clear. But here's something that the people of Ontario should know: Under the Canada Health Act, there are five principles. You always ask: What are those five principles? Here they are: The act must be comprehensive—that means covering everything, I think; universal—everywhere; portable; accessible; and publicly funded. Generally they talk about how the government ignores the first principle of the whole thing: Is it medically necessary?

I think it's important to know those five principles. Every year we find that something is being chipped away at. They aren't deemed to be accessible anymore. Do you understand? What's with these drugs? We've got people with these catastrophic diseases and they can't get the drugs because of money. This means it costs too much, so let them die.

On this blood thing, we support the bill. I think it should go to the committee. It should be heard. It's clear today. In this House there are three medical doctors, I believe. And we have the oldest member of the Legislature of Ontario ever in history: Mr. Kwinter. I have great regard for him as well. I'd like him to get up and do a two-minute hit here on this, if you would.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's always a pleasure to stand, particularly after my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo speaks. Of course, she gave a very involved examination of this bill and why we support it.

Tommy Douglas said that every generation would have to fight for medicare anew. That's absolutely true in this generation. We see an assumed attack, given their ideology, from the Conservative federal government, on medicare. That, we could have expected.

But I bring to the House's attention the fact that under this Liberal administration here, we have delisted a number of things: eye examinations. Let me tell you, for some of the most impoverished in my riding, it is a real difficulty to get that. Chiropractic, physiotherapy: Many things have been cut back under Liberal rule, when, in fact, we should be expanding medicare.

We social democrats look across the ocean to social democratic countries where they have—wow—dental care and—amazing—pharmacare. I can tell you that also in my riding, there are a number of people who can't afford the drugs that they're prescribed. And they certainly can't afford dental care, even though this government has been promising dental care to those who can't afford it for a while now. We have yet to see, really, the results of that. We should be expanding the roll of dental care instead of privatizing, which is what this speaks to.

We have privatization of medicare going on in this province. Open Toronto Life: You will see executive health clinics advertising, basically, OHIP-funded programs, but for those who would pay thousands of dollars for the same examinations. This has to stop, and this Liberal government isn't stopping it. This is the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The

member for Vaughan with further comments.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After listening to the member from Durham and the member from Parkdale-High Park and, certainly, the eloquent comments from my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I am a tiny bit disappointed that I didn't have the opportunity, after hearing what they said, to listen to most of the original remarks made by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. Having said that, I am delighted to learn that the members who have spoken since that original address by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo seemed very supportive of this bill, Bill 178.

I think it is important, as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure said just a moment ago, that we move forward with this, that we get this bill to committee. I think it is important for a number of reasons. I sincerely hope that for the balance of the debate around this particular bill—a debate that I believe shouldn't go on for a particularly extended period simply because it is an important matter that needs to get moving; it needs to be dealt with in a positive way. I would hope that, for the balance of the debate, members on all three sides of this House would focus their remarks, their thoughts and their contributions to this debate and keep their remarks germane to the matters that are contained in the bill, helping to underscore why it is so important for us as a Legislature, for the people we represent in all of our communities across Ontario, to move forward.

I'm happy to lend my voice and my support to this particular bill. I hope that we will continue to have a positive and productive and fruitful discussion around the bill and move forward with it at the earliest possible time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener-Waterloo, you have two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members from Vaughan, Parkdale-High Park, Durham, and of course, the Minister of Transportation, who I appreciate always and consistently brings a personal story to this Legislature. This is a personal issue. The privatization of blood donation should be a personal issue, and it should be a shared responsibility that we all push forward.

The concern and the caution, as it relates to Bill 178— I'm not sure; I think that this is the concern—is that this piece of legislation will prevent a parallel paid and voluntary system, because we already have a for-profit

plasma clinic in place in Ontario.

For the Minister of Transportation to get up and say, "This has been a long-standing issue, and I've lost friends"-and I have lost friends. I think that if we all looked into our own lives and went back in our own history, some of us have very personal stories of people whom we have lost because of the tainted-blood scandal. You don't have to look that far; you really do not.

It's more than a cautionary tale; it's something that should guide us as we develop legislation for the future. The fact that we already now are embarking on, and the government has allowed a window for, parallel paid versus a voluntary system of blood donation to happen in the province of Ontario is a missed opportunity. It is something that should guide us as we go forward. We should ensure that we have some strategic areas around establishing a provincial blood program, creating a culture of voluntary blood donations and building a stable blood donor pool by motivating and recruiting healthy participants.

This is the challenge before us. We welcome opportunity to debate this legislation. It is very, very important

to the health of the entire province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further dehate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have another opportunity to speak on another bill, Bill 178. We're happy to send it off to committee as fast as we can.

But it is interesting to hear a couple of Liberal members who say that there is urgency to this issue, that there's nothing new that the opposition parties have brought forth. "Let's get on with it," blah, blah. It's always useful to remember the fact that all three political parties have been in that same circle. When you get here, you will understand it again, or you will be reminded about what those days were like when you were over here—just as a little subtle reminder.

But I would say that when you speak about the urgency of the matter and, "Let's get on with it," you will remember that back in November 2012, Canadian Plasma Resources had made an application, and they were ready to open up a private for-profit clinic in downtown Toronto. Everyone was aware of that—everyone. It was a while back, 2012. We knew, everyone seems to have known, I think you knew, and yet somehow it didn't seem as if you were pressured to move quickly on the matter. So I think to myself when you say, "We should move quickly on the bill," now that you've introduced it, where were you when this problem was before us? Why does it take so long for the government to respond?

So it takes you a long time to respond, and that's not urgent. Then you bring forth your bill, and now things are urgent. You follow the train of thought? That's the little problemo I bring to you as a matter of consideration, because the Ministry of Health delayed, dallied. They applied to Health Canada; that's where they went first. You would know, of course, that it would eventually come to you. But it doesn't matter; they went there first and made their application there.

Health Canada decided, of course, that they needed to consult on the issue, and they brought a whole lot of people together, including the Ministry of Health. Various health organizations were there, Health Canada, of course, Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Quebec. They all consulted, talked about it. Health Canada, at the

end of it, produced a summary report.

The summary report has been available to the government on the website since July 26 last year. On July 26, 2013, Health Canada posted the report, as well as some backgrounders as to what this was all about. They opened it up for comments, and pretty much anybody and everybody was able to comment.

You will know, and you will remember, that the Ministry of Health has a lot of resources. They do, a lot of workers—

Ms. Catherine Fife: A lot of money.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A lot of pecunia is there as well—and resources, to be fair. So they knew what was going on with this file. At the end of it, Health Canada said the following—and we might have expected it; I'm not sure:

"There is no federal legislation that prohibits an establishment that collects blood or plasma from compensating donors. Compensation of donors falls within the authority of the" provincial or territorial governments.

You might expect them to do that; I'm not quite sure. I would have anticipated that as a provincial government. I certainly would have been ready with that response and certainly ready to have something in place.

As if that wasn't enough, the federal minister has known from the get-go—or at least this minister has known—that the federal government was not going to prevent a clinic from opening, and that it was quite fine with them to allow donors to be paid for their plasma.

We had a Health Canada consultation report posted. We knew that the federal government would likely be on their side and would likely say to you: "By the way, you, provincial government, and you, provincial minister, are in charge. This is your problemo, your responsibility." And we—you, the government—dilly-dallied. You do that on a regular basis.

Quebec, by the way, didn't do that. Quebec took a different route and they did not hesitate. They did not wait until there was somebody knocking on the door, saying, "By the way, I'm opening up a paid donor plasma clinic down the road from your Legislature and I intend to open quite a few more," and expecting that the Quebec government would simply say, "Yes, go right ahead. By the way, we're going to have something to deal with you in a couple of years." Quebec didn't wait—they act. But Ontario delays until they bring forth a bill and then say now that it's urgent.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Now, what are you doing: delaying, Rosario? Again?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just talking about you, really. I was talking about you, Minister, actually, earlier on, and your government and your health minister. I appreciate the fact that I'm debating the bill, which is what opposition parties tend to do.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You're whining.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Me, whining? I love that. The Minister of Transportation says that I'm whining. No, no; I don't whine. I do not whine. That's not my style.

Just to help you out: You will remember that there was a commission, the Krever commission. You had that information—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I was a witness.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, whether you were a witness or not, you're a minister here. We've got a health ministry; they knew what those recommendations were, and yet it takes governments a whole long time to respond to that.

What were those five principles that you were aware of? Numero uno: "Blood is a public resource" that we all need to live. I don't think anybody would disagree with that. The second—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Then why are we delaying?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** The minister says, "Why are we delaying?" The question I'm trying to put to you is, why did you delay so long to bring forth a bill?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** You don't treat your wife like this, do you? Always arguing—

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** But, Minister of Transportation, you're always arguing with everyone else, including me; I don't understand that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm Irish, and I—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I'm Italian; I don't know either.

The second was: "Donors should not be paid." Could that be any clearer, that donors should not be paid? They certainly don't equivocate like some politicians. It was a very clear principle, to make sure that the Canadian blood supply stays safe and that donors should not be paid. That was enough to get the government of Quebec to act and pass legislation that made it quite clear that in their province—in the province of Quebec—you are not allowed to pay for blood or plasma. But in our government, it took us a while.

The third principle: "Sufficient blood should be collected so that importation from other countries is unnecessary." This is an issue that has been brought forward a number of times during this debate. Ontario does import some medication and different therapeutic agents that are made from plasma from other countries, and the third principle by the Krever commission was that "Sufficient blood should be collected so that importation from other countries is unnecessary." In my mind, it's very clear, and it gives us a pathway. It gives the Minister of Health a pathway to say and to do—not just to say, but to do something about it.

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**Ms. Catherine Fife:** What took them so long?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It does take a long while. It takes people like Hélène Campbell, who, on her own, by tweeting about organ donations, was able to increase the number of people who registered, who were giving blood, who were ready to give blood. It takes individuals like that to get Ontarians to actually do the right thing. Governments have the power and the resources to be able to do a lot more than what individuals like Hélène Campbell was able to do on her own. That's the job of

governments. We think they can and should be doing more, but sometimes they are very, very slow to act.

The fourth principle is, "Access to blood products should be free and universal." I don't think that is complicated, either. They should be free and universal, something that I dare say is becoming a serious problem in this province. We are privatizing more and more of our health care services, something that scares me incredibly. It scares me because those without income are suffering and will suffer more and more as time goes on. As people earn less and less and have fewer jobs that pay well, where job security is at risk on a regular—daily—basis, that will become a growing concern for the citizens of Ontario.

We kick people out of hospitals in a hurry. No sooner are you in a hospital than they kick you out as fast as they possibly can, and when you're out of that hospital, many of the services that are paid there are no longer paid. Once you're out of that hospital, it comes right out of your little pocket. If you have deep pockets, God bless, you're okay.

We know there are a lot of billionaires in the world, and we know there are a lot of billionaires in Canada. In fact, 83 families in Canada—God bless them—earn more than 11 million Canadians put together.

Hon. John Milloy: No, no.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know it's hard to believe, House leader. It's hard to believe, and I don't hear you saying that all too often. People like me, people like New Democrats, have to say that. But you've got a whole lot of wealthy people, and there are not as many—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. There aren't too many Liberals that I can count on this worker's hand who will stand up and be prepared to be social democrats in their views. I can count them on my hand—federal and provincial.

Interjection.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'm not sure about that. *Interjections*.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not sure about that.

Speaker, there are a whole lot of wealthy people in this province. They're going to be okay with privatizing services. They're quite happy to have the organization, the Canadian Plasma Resources company, set up shop here on Adelaide; I think it is number 83. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence might remind those wealthy friends that he has that they could just go down there and get their plasma for a little amount of money. It won't cost them much.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's pocket change.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** It is pocket change for wealthy people, but for ordinary folk, it's a problemo. We shouldn't have to pay for that.

I am worried about how we privatize more and more. I have got to tell you, Speaker, it is all done incrementally and very surreptitiously. Nothing is ever done so very clearly and loudly. The previous Conservative government did it ever so quietly, and Liberals do it just as

subtly and quietly so that nobody notices. In the end, when people finally lose a service, they say, "When did that happen? Was it the Tories? Was it the Liberals?" People can't even remember. They won't even know. Tories will do a lot more and a lot faster. Liberals will do it a lot more slowly, subtly, quietly. They do it, but it is incremental, and it does happen. I don't see that many Liberals on this hand who stand up each and every day saying, "I don't like it." I don't see that many. See this hand? Not many on that hand.

This bill does bring forth some amendments, and it doesn't speak about five principles; it speaks about three principles. So I'm not quite sure why we didn't speak about those five principles mentioned by the Krever commission. They only referenced three, so something worries me about what we've left out, something that we should be able to talk about in committee.

But one of the things that the minister does introduce that is subject to a great deal of inquiry, debate and possible confusion is that the minister says: "Within Ontario's health care system, blood donations are viewed as a public resource"—no problem—but, "2. Blood donors should not be paid, except in exceptional circumstances."

Speaker, that worries me. I want to bring my little knowledge of the OMB to make the connection with this. Bill 51, which was introduced by a former minister, Mr. Gerretsen—he said that we're finally going to give the municipalities the power that they've been looking for for a long, long time—

Hon. John Milloy: What does this have to do with

blood?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'm making the connection; I'll be right back.

Finally municipalities will be able to have the power to do their own land use planning. The language they introduced was—Speaker, you would know this—that the OMB has to "have regard to" municipal decisions.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'm not seeing the connection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You will.

So what we know—I'm not even a lawyer, and I know this; think about that. There are a whole lot of lawyers who understand that "have regard to" means, "We don't have to pay any attention to it." All it means is, "We listened to the city, they put forth their case, we regarded their opinion, so to speak, but we don't have to listen to it."

That language was introduced by a former minister. *Interiections*.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Good to see you, Premier. Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I came here to see you.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I love that. The Premier came to hear the remaining part of my speech. That is so nice. That is good.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I was watching you from my office. I just had to come.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Even better—a face-to-face kind of encounter.

The whole idea of "having regard to"—this bill was overseen by a minister who was, himself, a lawyer.

Lawyers understand that "having regard to" means absolutely zero, nada, nihil, nothing; they all start with an N, did you notice? Unless you change the language to "conform to" or "consistent with," "having regard to" is weak and is absolutely meaningless.

This language here, "Blood donors should not be paid, except in exceptional circumstances": What does that mean? Are we leaving ourselves open? Of course we are.

What you're doing is allowing these private companies to hire these expensive lawyers who are going to come, in each and every case, and defend this clause that says "except in exceptional circumstances." There are always going to be exceptional circumstances, and lawyers will make it so because that's their job. Lawyers get paid very well to deal with these kinds of nuances of language.

I can tell you, we will be buried in legalese, in a legalistic defence of a private sector that wants to do this. They will defend—Doctor, tell me if I'm wrong. Let me know in your two minutes. I need your opinion. Right? There are various medical doctors in here. Help me out. Do you think I'm correct? Do you think those private clinics will hire those expensive lawyers to go and put in a defence until they get what they want?

And they do. Wealthy people usually get what they want.

Developers are getting what they want at the OMB on a regular basis. Why? Because they've got a whole lot of pecunia to hire the best lawyers and to hire the best planners. They're ready to go as soon as the appeal happens. You understand, Speaker, because you were a municipal councillor. You know how this works.

So we've got some concerns. Obviously, we wanted to go to committee hearings, because we want to hear from the doctors, we want to hear from the lawyers—the good ones at least—and from the general public who might have some concerns about that specific issue that I mentioned. They may be all right with the rest of it and they might say, "Finally, the government has acted; God bless. It took them a long while." But now we have it—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And the Minister of Transportation says, "Let's get on with it," and I agree with

him. Let's get on with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I heard with much interest and passion what the member from Trinity-Spadina had to say. This is what I have to say to him in response: The fact is that this is a bill that needs to pass in a time-sensitive manner. If you're really serious, if you truly want to protect the integrity of Ontario's blood supply, I'm going to ask that we stop delaying, we stop holding up this bill and send it to second reading right away. I know you have some concerns. The practical way to address those concerns is in committee. The sooner we can get it to second reading, the sooner we can get it to

committee. We can make it a better bill and pass it in time.

The health critics for both the PC Party and the NDP have agreed that this bill needs to be passed as soon as possible. I don't understand why the member from Trinity—Spadina spent 15 minutes talking about all sorts of things when what we really need now is not talk; what we really need now is action.

I'm going to ask one more time: This is truly a timesensitive bill. We need to pass it. That does not mean that we don't address concerns that you have. I'm just asking for us to do it in committee, move it to committee, because all I can say is, if we don't do it, we will be responsible for this company going ahead and doing exactly what we don't want them to do. All I'm going to ask is, let's stop holding it up and move this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity—Spadina is always entertaining and generally informative. However, I would say this, though: The idea that it's time-sensitive is another glowing example of poor management. Here's why. When the member from Nickel Belt spoke two weeks ago, she made a very important point, that there's a clinic being developed now in downtown Toronto—the leasehold improvements are over \$6 million, I heard. This company is based on a private model, which this bill is trying to rule out of order.

Here's what I'd be interested in. In fact, it should go to committee. But one of the most important questions is, would this present building, working with the Ministry of Health people, be in a position to sue the Wynne government? The reason why I say that is because, knowingly the ministry—there's a pilot activity going on—has expended money for a project that today is not illegal, as it is in other provinces.

I'm telling and putting on the record today that I sense that this government has got another major problem of mismanagement. In this case here, it may not be a billion dollars, but this company under a legal activity has invested \$6 million to develop a clinic to collect plasma, a much-needed product for developing the kinds of medications that are around today. This bill is putting them out of business. If I was the business person and the investor, I would be suing the Wynne government the Monday after this passes. I do say this in all sincerity because the Premier—

Mr. Mike Colle: Shame on you.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, no, Mr. Colle, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I'm telling you this because this is a commercial world we're in. There are well-intended investors. Other jurisdictions have this option of paying for plasma. It's just an idea and I think it should be listened to and studied.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure to comment on the amazing comments from the member from

Trinity—Spadina. I think his most salient point for me is the increased privatization in health care we have seen. It is insipid. Actually, it has slid right into the province. Quite honestly, it is quite alarming sometimes to hear members of the government stand up in this House and say, "Let's get this piece of legislation to committee and let's make it stronger," as the member did opposite. Why would you not bring a piece of strong legislation, first and foremost, to the floor of this Legislature? Why would you not build it right the first time? And why would you stand up in this House and say to us on this side of the House, "Let's rush this through; get it passed," when it has taken you so long to do the right thing in the first place? I think the member from Trinity—Spadina has made those points in a very eloquent way, as he usually does

There is an outstanding issue that needs to be brought to this House, and it goes like this: "Currently, Canadian Plasma Resources (CPR) is in the pilot phase of their operations. At this point, unless Bill 178 is law, CPR could provide payment to donors." This state of affairs has existed already in this province for many years, and now you say, "Let's rush it through."

We need to bring the concerns of our constituents to this place. We need to share our concerns with you. We need to hold you to account. It is our job, and quite honestly, I think that we're doing a pretty damn good job of it. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I just want to say that I think the member from Trinity–Spadina made some very profound points. They weren't about the bill, but they were very profound, so I'm going to make some comments that are profound and not about the bill too. He talked about the NDP and its social conscience.

Today we had interfaith leaders from all across Ontario at the ISARC conference, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. Alex Himelfarb spoke—the former head of the Privy Council in Ottawa. He talked about the importance of taxes and the common good.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope the member is going to tie his comments to the bill and the previous speaker.

Mr. Mike Colle: He wasn't talking about the bill; I don't want to talk about the bill.

Anyway, he talked about the need for people to invest in health care, invest in schools, and invest in infrastructure for the common good. The NDP used to talk like that. They no longer do, because they're the party of what they call business. They're the business party now, big-business business. They're sort of Tories in the slow lane.

Anyway, I also wanted to say that the NDP used to be for local democracy. They fought against the megacity—the member from Beaches–East York.

In committee the other day, I was shocked. The NDP blocked the proceeding of Bill 166, which would give the people in the city of Toronto a say about the ranked ballot, give them the right to debate that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to come back to the legislation.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** The NDP blocked Bill 166. This is not the NDP of Howard Hampton and it's not the NDP of Bob Rae. I don't know. What NDP is it?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's the NDP of the business—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Trinity-Spadina, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think, deep down, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence is a social democrat in a hurry. That's what I think—deep down. But it's hard to say; I don't know. I appreciate your comments—having nothing at all to do with mine.

Speaker, we've only had two and a half hours on this bill, and I appreciate the fact that the government wants to pass it quickly. I do appreciate it. That's their job and that's their role. But, having had only two and a half hours of debate, it's not as if it can be said that we are slowing down the bill or that we are trying to stop the bill. That's not the case. The fact that a number of members want to speak to the bill, which we have done today, and the fact that we raised some issues, doesn't mean that we're going to stop this bill. That's not at all what we're doing.

We're going to be supporting this bill. We want it to go to hearings. That's something that will happen and will happen soon. But we did want this opportunity to raise our points and to say, as a reminder, that if you were concerned about Canadian Plasma Resources setting up shop—a private, for-profit clinic—in November 2012, you would have moved with the same speed as you're trying to get the opposition to move on this bill. If you didn't care enough in November 2012 to move quickly, after you knew that this private clinic was going to be set up—and they've got three on the go—I'm saying to you, let's be careful about the accusations. That's all I'm saying.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm very happy to have had that chance.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m. *The House adjourned at 1800.* 

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton		
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence		
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell		
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville		
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan		
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville		
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest		
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering		
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park		
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord		
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle	
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing		
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener-Waterloo		
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud		
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls		
Gélinas France (NDP)	Nickel Belt		

Nickel Belt

Gélinas, France (NDP)

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)		Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
	les Îles	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Emie (PC)	Oxford	**
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
(1.21)		Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest-Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	ro
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
	York Centre / York-Centre	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)		AC. : CD - 1 ACC : . /AC : ACC :
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et de Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, Jim (PC) McKenna, Jane (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster-Dundas -Flamborough- Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernemer
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports  Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre  de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Transfer of Francisco (Francisco de Francisco Indiano)
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
a		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)		Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Leader, Liberar Party of Officiatio / Cher du Parti floeral de l'Officiatio
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Brampton-Springdale	Minister of Acongnial Atlans / Williste des Atlantes autochtones
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Mike Colle, Joe Dickson

Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat

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Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack

Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop

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Todd Smith

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Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti

France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek Phil McNeely, Norm Miller

John O'Toole, Jagmeet Singh

Soo Wong

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Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns

Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife

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Catherine Fife, John Fraser

Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna

Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns

Bill Walker

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## Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh

Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh

Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon

Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman

Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek

Paul Miller

Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

# Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott

Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon

Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott

Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson

Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor

Soo Wong

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Nº 124

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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 7 April 2014

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 7 avril 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Dave Levac

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 April 2014

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 avril 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'm pleased to rise to recognize a number of my constituents from the great riding of Oxford, who are here to meet with the Ministry of the Environment this morning.

In the members' gallery is the chairperson of Oxford People Against the Landfill, Steve McSwiggan, and one of the members, Karen Paton Evans; and from the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice, Bryan Smith.

I'm also pleased to introduce the mayor of Ingersoll, Mayor Ted Comiskey; the mayor of Zorra, Margaret Lupton; and the mayor of South-West Oxford, David Mayberry.

I'd like to welcome them all to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to welcome to Queen's Park Christine Albee from the Ontario division of the Canadian Diabetes Association. They are here at Queen's Park for the launch of the diabetes charter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to introduce and to welcome Mr. Syed Faisal Ahsan, a professor of architecture visiting from Michigan, visiting my riding of Richmond Hill. Please join me in welcoming Professor Ahsan.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is a great privilege to announce that I have two people visiting from the riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Johan Tangelder and Bernard Tangelder. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

As well, I'd like to introduce Kelly Harris from Central 1 Credit Union. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like all members of the Legislature to welcome my big sister, Susan, who is here—Susan Houghton and her loving husband, Roy. Welcome to both of them.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to welcome, in the members' gallery, two constituents of mine—and they're also in my riding association—from Chatham—Kent—Essex: Ed O'Brien, a past president, and our current riding president, Jeff Parker. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, want to welcome people from the diabetes association here. We're celebrating the launch of the Diabetes Charter for Canada today. Christine Albee is here, Phil Weintraub, and Kingsley Kwok. Welcome to you all.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I wish to welcome students from St. Patrick Secondary School in my riding, who are coming in just now.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to welcome to the Legislature 80 grades 5, 6 and 7 students of Khalsa School Malton, and their teachers, principal Sarvjit Soni, his wife, Surinder Soni, and photographer, Bashir Nassar. Khalsa School Malton was among the top 10 Ontario schools, based on recent grades 3 and 6 EQAO results. I want to congratulate the school's staff and students for this great achievement, and I welcome them to the Legislature. They will be meeting with the Premier later on in the afternoon.

#### DEATH OF MINER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levae): A point of order from the leader of the third party.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I seek unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence to mark the passing of a miner in Sudbury who died last night on the job at Copper Cliff mine.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is seeking unanimous consent to have a moment of silence upon the knowledge of a death of a miner last night in Sudbury. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would have all members and guests please stand for a moment's silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Our condolences to the family and friends.

#### VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Kingston and the Islands, in honour of page captain Urooj Ali, mother Naila Ali, father Syed Muhammad Ali, sister Aliya Ali and brother Ahmed Syed Bakhtihar are in the members' gallery, and we welcome them on behalf of the member.

On behalf of the member from Ottawa Centre for captain page Caroline Falkner, grandparents Beth and Michael Martin are here in the public gallery. We welcome them as guests.

Finally, with us today in the Speaker's gallery is a delegation from Migori County Assembly of the Republic of Kenya. This delegation is led by the Honourable Gordon Ogola, Speaker of the Migori County Assembly. Please join me in welcoming warmly our guests from Kenya.

It is now time for question period.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the finance minister. Dalton McGuinty was certainly known for his reckless spending. His finance minister doubled our provincial debt and had record deficits. Your first full year as finance minister was 2013, and the debt actually went up, not down. The deficit was \$2 billion greater under your watch.

I'm going to ask you, Minister: You had more revenue come in. How did you actually do worse than Dalton McGuinty's finance minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, and I also reference the Leader of the Opposition to his own projections, which, by the way, were even worse than what we did because we did cut spending. We actually—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —and were disciplined in our determination in terms of reducing our spending and controlling it, which we do.

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We recognize that revenues are much lower than forecast, and as a result, we take the necessary and appropriate steps to work towards our balance by 2017-18. That's the prudent way.

The member opposite would claim that the best way to do this is to do across-the-board cuts—harm our recovery and ensure that those who are looking for security and opportunity are cut off the system. We're not going to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course I make the decisions to balance the budget and send a signal that Ontario is open for job creation again. Isn't that what we're here for?

Again, the 2012 deficit, the last year of the Dalton McGuinty government, was \$9.2 billion. Instead of getting closer to balance, you actually increased the deficit. The Wynne Liberals are actually more reckless in their spending than even Dalton McGuinty was. I recognize it's the same crew in different chairs. But, Finance Minister, you had \$3 billion in additional revenue, and the deficit got worse, not better.

What kind of signal does that send to job creators about the ability of the province to attract new jobs and new investment?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're record-breakers-

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are record-breakers because what we've done for five years in a row is, we have beaten our targets.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're also lawbreakers.

Hon. Charles Sousa: For five years in a row, we have exceeded the targets, and our deficit has actually been—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I would ask the member from Nepean–Carleton to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw, Speaker. The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** It's necessary for us to always look to the long term and ensure that, while short-term targets may be amended as required, we will always stay on target to balance the books by 2017-18 in a very prudent and pragmatic way.

Every decision we're making is about creating jobs. It is why we have created over 450,000 net new jobs since the depth of the recession. It's why we have created over 650,000 net new jobs since 2003.

The economy is growing because of the investments and stimulus that we have made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We are making some progress. I did get the finance minister to admit they are record-breakers when it comes to debt in the province. In fact, the finance minister now knows that, under the Wynne-McGuinty Liberals, we actually have worse debt than California, considered the basket case of North America when it comes to debt. You are actually a record-breaker now; you have surpassed California.

The concern I have is—you mentioned the long term—this is the most damaging policy in the long term, to go deep in debt. That means we won't have money for things we care about, like help for special-needs kids and the best technology in our hospitals. It means jobs will leave the province and go to Alberta or Saskatchewan.

Minister, I think it's an extraordinary feat of incompetence to actually make the deficit bigger when you had more money coming in. What concerns me is, under your budget-leaking team, you're going to now have 39 new spending announcements of \$5.7 billion. My simple question is, where are you going to find the money?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As a result of the work and transformation that we have been doing, we're borrowing \$23 billion less this year than anticipated. Our deficit has come down five years in a row, well ahead of what we had targeted. We were the only government in all of Canada to actually cut spending year over year. We have controlled it at less than 1% for the last five years running. As a result of that, we have become the lowest-cost government per capita anywhere in Canada—anywhere at all. We're proud of that, because of the work that we're doing collaboratively with our stakeholders.

More importantly, we have already instituted 80% of Don Drummond's recommendations and have now exceeded even his anticipated forecast in the work that we've done, in the billions, because of what we have done going forward.

The member erroneously makes reference to California as if somehow that's a fair comparison. It is not. We are the largest subnational jurisdiction in the world that borrows; they cannot.

#### **GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My question is to the finance minister. If I offended Californians by comparing them to the Wynne Liberals, I do apologize to California taxpayers.

I don't think what the minister said is in keeping with the actual facts. The minister said that they have cut spending. No; spending has actually gone up dramatically under the Liberals. The minister says they're the lowest-cost jurisdiction. Minister, low-cost jurisdictions do not run \$11-billion deficits.

I want to ask you one more thing—you know what? I'll go back, because you didn't answer my question. This week, you're rolling out, in your budget-leaking team plan, an additional \$400 million. I don't see where we're going to get that money. You're going to have 39 announcements for \$5.7 billion total. Isn't your plan going to drive Ontario into receivership? Our plan is going to drive Ontario onto the path to prosperity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The opposition member wants to talk about the facts, so let's please talk about the facts. All this is is gimmicks and slogans and Ford-nation-type politics. Let's talk about the facts. We did cut spending last year, well beyond what was ever anticipated. We are the lowest per-capita-cost government because of the work we've done—substantially lower than all other provinces, even the federal government. We will announce these answers in the budget in this House, nowhere else, like the member has absolutely been making clear. Thankfully to them—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** You've already announced them outside. What was that big speech about this morning?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member from Prince Edward-Hastings—now that's twice; please.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Thankfully, to the opposition, now Ontarians are well aware of our investments that we're planning to go forward with, because they recognize that that is important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's just hard to ask the finance minister questions when his grip on the facts seems superficial at best. Your deficit actually went up. You actually increased the deficit in your first full year as finance minister. I'm using your own numbers. I'll use your own language. You rolled out on Wednesday a very—almost an embrace in mediocrity. You said that Ontario's long-term growth is going to be lower than the global average, weaker than the Americans, weaker than the British, weaker than the Australians, weaker than the other nine provinces, and that's if everything goes according to your plan. I believe Ontario can do a lot better than that. I've got a plan to create a million jobs in our province, an Ontario that leads again.

The minister boasts about his 39 big spending initiatives of \$5.7 billion of more borrowed money. I want to ask the minister: When we look through what you're announcing, in your budget outside of the House, why is there not one single idea on how to get Ontarians back to work in this great province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** The details and the announcements will be made in this House, nowhere else. We're going to be illustrating all of these initiatives in our budget in this House.

Let me say this: The member opposite talks about the facts. Here's a great fact that everyone should be well aware of: Our deficit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough. Thank you. I'll send somebody home.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our deficit is actually \$900 million lower than the Tim Hudak PCs promised for this time in their 2011 PC platform. They themselves projected a higher deficit, a higher spending number than we've actually achieved. We're outpacing them, and they have the audacity to say they can do otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, it's difficult to get answers from the finance minister when it seems like his grasp of the basic numbers is tangential at best. Again, the deficit under Dwight Duncan, your predecessor, was \$9.2 billion. You've increased it by over \$2 billion, despite more revenue coming in. I think that when you're adding on more and more debt, that challenges our ability to provide the services we care about, and it chases jobs out of the province of Ontario. You say the best we can do is trail the other nine provinces for the next 20 years. I say we can lead again. My plan will do exactly that.

Minister, when businesses and job creators look at Ontario, they see that you're on the path to tripling our debt, you've doubled our hydro rates and we have the worst red tape in all of Canada. Is it any wonder they're investing in other provinces, in other states? I've got a plan to bring the jobs back here to the province of Ontario, my million-jobs plan. If you have no plan, why don't you give our plan a try? It's going to work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I find it passing strange—the member has just made reference to the fact that we have to afford the debt that we maintain, because that is critically important. That's what we measure, our net debt to GDP, and ensuring that it takes the proper trajectory so that we don't pass a burden of debt onto future generations. One of the ways we do that is ensuring that there's greater prosperity and economic revival. We've been en-

hancing that; they have chosen to do the opposite. We're making the investments necessary to prop up our economy and create those jobs which have been created and which under their leadership would not have been. So we will take those steps necessary.

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We have made a very dynamic and inviting business climate, because we have more businesses investing in Ontario than in most jurisdictions in North America. We have more start-ups in Ontario than all of Canada combined. That's a strong signal.

They want to go back to the days of assembly-line manufacturing—we can't compete. We need to compete on those jobs for tomorrow.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Acting Premier. It is unfortunate that the Premier is at a campaign-style event instead of being in the Legislature today to answer the questions.

When the Premier took over the Ontario Liberal Party, she said, " ... we are going to build on the legacy of Dalton." Can the Acting Premier tell us whether this government is still so proud of that legacy of Dalton McGuinty?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am enormously proud of the progress that we have made and continue to make under Premier Wynne. The member opposite feels it necessary to comment on the attendance of our Premier. What I would like to say is that our Premier has a very strong record, not only when it comes to attending question period, but to answering questions when she's here.

We've made significant progress. Last week, our finance minister announced that our revised deficit will meet our target by \$400 million. We gained 13,400 net new jobs in March, and our unemployment rate fell by 0.2%, to 7.3%. We are implementing Drummond's recommendations—we're 80% of the way there—to increase efficiencies. We've beaten our deficit target—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is unfortunate that the Premier couldn't be here today to answer the questions, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. No, actually, keep it going. Sorry.

It is not the tradition of this place to reference anyone's attendance in this House, and I would say not to do it again, please.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, with regard to the ongoing investigation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock. We're going to get order.

Carry on, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With regard to the ongoing investigation by the OPP, the Premier said, "That is not the way government should operate. That is not the way a Premier's office should conduct itself." She's scrambling to distance herself from the Premier that she worked for, she served with, and she helped elect. Can the Acting Premier tell us whether the Liberals are still proud of the Dalton McGuinty legacy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to our Premier's response to the issues around the gas plants, I think any observer would know that there has been more openness and transparency from this Premier than we have seen before. When the Premier became Premier, she made it a top priority to bring openness and transparency to this issue, and we have taken appropriate steps.

One of the things we've done is we've improved record-keeping right across government. A directive to all political staff has been sent out. We've got mandatory training in place now. We're improving our archiving requirements—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think Ontarians will be disappoint—sorry, I should take that back. People expect their government to be open and accountable, but instead of getting straightforward answers or actual accountability, we have a Liberal government pretending they've never heard of the leader that they served with for a decade, and a Premier who finds a lot of time to talk to lawyers but can't manage to make it to work. Does the Acting Premier think this is fair to families?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I would hope that the member opposite will support the accountability act, because that will prohibit the wilful deletion of records; it would create a penalty.

We have been very, very open: 400,000 pages. Think about that for a minute: 400,000 pages of documents have been provided to the justice committee, including 30,000 pages from the Premier's office.

It's important that we get the facts out there; it is not helpful when there are unfounded allegations. We will continue to get the work done that the people of this province expect us to get done.

#### POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is again to the Acting Premier. On Friday, New Democrats wrote to the Premier to ensure that the former deputy chief of staff to the Premier, Laura Miller, could participate in the investigation about the wiping of government computers. Have the Ontario Liberals been in touch with the BC Liberals to ensure that Laura Miller can return to Ontario to be part of this investigation?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier. Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader. Hon. John Milloy: The justice committee right now is

**Hon. John Milloy:** The justice committee right now is looking into the matter of the gas plants. They have the

responsibility and the right to call whichever witnesses they see fit. There's a process in place—you would be familiar with that, Mr. Speaker—if they do encounter any problems in terms of calling forward that witness.

But I would simply point out to the leader of the third party that the government has been co-operating fully, not only with the justice committee—the Premier herself was the one who asked for its mandate to be broadened and its powers increased—but we have also been co-operating fully with the Ontario Provincial Police in their investigation. We will continue to co-operate with everyone who's looking into this very serious matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The gas plant scandal has now crossed the Rockies. BC Liberal Premier Christy Clark isn't saying whether she thinks that Laura Miller should participate in the gas plant investigation here in Ontario. Will the Ontario Liberal government contact the BC Liberal government to explain how important it is for Ontarians to get to the bottom of the waste and the \$1.1 billion that was spent on the gas plant relocation and the wiping of computers in the Premier's office?

**Hon. John Milloy:** The other week I commented that I think a lot of members are watching old Ellery Queen reruns. Perhaps the leader of the third party is watching

Perry Mason a little too much.

There is an ongoing police investigation. Let's have the police undertake their work. There's a committee of this Legislature which is considering this matter and considering which witnesses to bring forward. It is their right to put forward that list and to engage those witnesses put forward. Let's leave it to the committee to do their work.

I can speak for the government of Premier Wynne and say that we have co-operated fully with the justice committee. I appeared in front of it. The Premier appeared several times, as did the Minister of Energy and other members of this caucus. We will continue to co-operate with the justice committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The utter arrogance that the House leader of the Liberal government would make jokes about the work the opposition is trying to do to hold this government to account on the scandal that happened with the gas plants is unacceptable to the people of this province.

The gas plant scandal has become a nationwide scandal. Ontarians are wondering whether the Liberal government will do its part to ensure that a key Liberal witness participates in the ongoing investigations that are being done not only by the police but also by the members of this very Legislature.

Does the Acting Premier agree that it is important that Laura Miller and Peter Faist come back from British Columbia to be part of the gas plant investigation? Will the Acting Premier commit that the Ontario Liberals will send that message to the BC Liberals?

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, the government will cooperate fully with the justice committee and with the OPP investigation.

But if that honourable member wants to talk about arrogance, perhaps she should comment about her amnesia of the fact that it was the New Democratic Party as well as the Progressive Conservative Party that opposed the very gas plants that we're talking about. The fact of the matter is that all three parties of this Legislature are on record opposing those gas plants. If she wants to talk about arrogance, the fact is she has conveniently forgotten that fact because it makes her case not as straightforward. If she wants to talk about arrogance, then let's talk about her amnesia when it comes to that unfortunate fact

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** My question is, as well, to the government House leader. In the twilight of his days here as member of provincial Parliament, can he confirm for this House that the individual who allegedly wiped clean, at the behest of the former Premier's chief of staff, 24 hard drives in that office had a criminal record? Yes or no?

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Hon. John Milloy: Again, there is an ongoing OPP investigation. I think we should allow the OPP to undertake their work. What we heard from the officer who appeared in front of the committee last week were two things: first of all, that the matter in hand dealt with Mr. Livingston under the former Premier, and also that members should stay out of it.

Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased that our Premier has sought some legal advice in this and has taken legal action, because what we are asking that member and the Leader of the Opposition is to retract their statements and to apologize. What's interesting is that member in particular has had some experience with this and has had to do it in the past, so perhaps, based on that experience, she should take the same action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm going to go back to the Minister of Government Services. This is actually a pretty big deal. We want to know if this is the policy of the Liberal government and the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party: to employ people with a criminal record without undergoing a security check, and to give them unfettered access to the government's most secret information to allegedly then destroy that information to avoid public scrutiny.

Two Ontario judges said this individual was "inconsistent" as a witness and "lacked credibility." But it was the minister's government, his caucus and his party, that, up until last weekend, allowed this individual to access some of the most sensitive government, legislative and party documents. In fact, the Minister of Government Services has been the government House leader the entire time. As the constitutionally responsible minister of the IT of the government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. *Interjections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, much of what was said by that member—allegations which are unproven—is in fact the topic of the OPP investigation. Let's leave it with the OPP.

But, again, the honourable member seems to need some reminding of January 31, 2005, when she put out a statement that I'd like to read in part to the House: "The operators of www.bluedraft.com"—that was a blog that the member was involved with—"Ms. Lisa MacLeod"—the member from Nepean—Carleton—"and Chris Froggatt, would like to sincerely apologize to Maureen Murphy-Makin and Rick Morgan for wrongfully implicating them in an erroneous story in January 2004 revolving around the decision by former PC leader Peter MacKay not to seek the leadership of the new Conservative Party of Canada. We admit that the facts as reported in the article were false and unfortunately based on a misleading source" and it goes on and on, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

It's not acceptable to read anything into the record that you cannot say that is unparliamentary language, so I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. John Milloy: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Those who decide to pre-empt what I'm trying to do will also have the same problem.

New question.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. The government keeps claiming that they're being open, but reports are still kept secret. It was because of an OPP anti-rackets branch warrant that we learned that the Ontario public service's cyber security branch completed a report on the Premier's office computers that were wiped clean, allegedly by Peter Faist. Will the Acting Premier make that report public today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Speaker, again, I think this is a selective presentation of the facts. If the honourable member reads the document that was released by the court about a week and a half ago, it makes reference to a number of activities, including the one he just referenced, which are all part of the ongoing OPP investigation.

I want to state very clearly: The investigation is entirely independent, as it should be. OPP investigators have been working with a federal crown attorney from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada from the beginning to ensure its independence.

The member opposite seems to be suggesting that the government should somehow be interfering or inserting itself in the investigation. That would be entirely inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. I think the good advice that we heard

from the OPP officer last Thursday is, let's allow them to do their work

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: We learned that the Liberal Party itself also has a secret report. Only when the allegations about Peter Faist were made public in an unsealed police warrant did the government say, "An internal investigation was conducted.... The company was informed yesterday that its services at the party office were terminated."

Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians what that internal investigation found?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the honourable member should check his facts, as should much of the opposition. The fact is, as was announced—and I believe I said it here in the Legislature, or perhaps the Premier—when those court documents were unsealed, we looked into the matter and determined the two contracts that we have made public, and the details of those, as is appropriate, were turned over to the police. They will determine if it's relevant to their investigation.

In fact, the OPP has the leadership in this independent investigation, and the advice that we heard—very prudent advice—last week from the OPP officer in front of the justice committee is, let's allow the OPP to do their work and stop this amateur detective hour here in the Legislature.

#### **DIABETES**

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today, on World Health Day, I want to raise the issue of one of the most prevalent and debilitating chronic diseases facing our province today.

Nearly one and a half million Ontarians live with diabetes. Diabetes is an illness that disproportionately impacts those from the South Asian and African communities in this province, and the prevalence of diabetes in Ontario is rising.

Like many other diseases, awareness is the first step to living a healthier life. Due to the stigma that is still attached to diabetes, many diabetics do not openly disclose that they suffer from it. Could the minister tell us what can be done to address the needs of Ontarians with diabetes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for this very important question. Diabetes does affect many families right across the province, and that's why people living with diabetes who need help managing their condition have access to much more services than were available a decade ago.

Later today, I'll be participating in the launch of the Canadian Diabetes Association's Diabetes Charter for Canada. This charter will give people with diabetes a stronger voice. It articulates a set of rights held by those suffering from the disease and it advocates for timely patient-centred care. This is the approach we're driving throughout our health care system. We're working to

encourage patients to be at the centre of their decisionmaking.

Part of this is a focus on public education to help people with diabetes manage their illness, and that's why we've moved to put out a new video to help diabetics properly monitor their blood glucose levels, available at ontario.ca/diabetes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** The information the minister provided on the diabetes charter is interesting and is something that will be able to aid all of those who suffer from this disease.

In my riding, the Malvern community is serviced by Taibu Community Health Centre. This organization provides localized care that is catered to the community needs. This localized care at Taibu includes a diabetes education program. The goal of this program is to improve the quality of life for people affected by type 2 diabetes by providing a culturally and linguistically appropriate service and high standards of diabetes care and education that promote self-management.

Like this program, there are several other examples of how our health care system is working to improve the lives of those living with diabetes and encouraging everyone to take steps to prevent diabetes. Can the minister please share the other initiatives our government has taken to fight diabetes and keep Ontarians healthy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm proud to say under our government every Ontarian with diabetes who wants a family doctor gets one. Since 2008, our Ontario diabetes strategy has improved access and quality of care for Ontarians with diabetes. We're the first province in Canada to fully fund insulin pumps for children and adults with type 1 diabetes; we provide screening and early detection programs—more than 2,700 high-risk individuals were screened last year; we've established six centres for complex diabetes care; and we have increased the number of diabetes education teams from 220 to 321.

But the best way to fight diabetes is to prevent it in the first place. That's why we've introduced proposed legislation, the Making Healthier Choices Act, to help parents make the best choice for their kids and families by providing nutritional information on menus. I urge all members to support this legislation.

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#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Acting Premier.

Many in our caucus have spent a lot of time getting to the bottom of the gas plant scandal. We've all seen your systematic attempt to keep the truth from coming out. In fact, many of us were victims of your attempts. You produce some documents and say, "That's everything." We push, and two weeks later we get 20,000 more documents. You tell us it was \$40 million to cancel; we push and the Auditor General tells us it's \$1.1 billion. We bring contempt; you bring prorogation. We ask you to

bring in the OPP; you laugh. We bring in the OPP; we get damning evidence. You try to silence our leader; we get suspicious.

If we had stopped at any of the roadblocks you put up, we wouldn't have learned the cost of this scandal or the depths you've gone to cover this up. What are you hiding?

Interjections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.
Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, I feel like that guy in the old movies after the Broadway plays, when everyone sits around waiting for the reviews to come in. Well, the reviews are in on how that party, particularly the leader, has handled this issue. Let me share some of the quotes.

Headline in the Sudbury Star, April 3: The Leader of the Opposition "Loses Credibility with Cover-Up Claims." Again, the Sudbury Star, April 3: The Leader of the Opposition "engaged in unnecessary and ugly vitriol over the computer hard-drive controversy."

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're looking for some an-

swers from you.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Warned. You know what that means. Thank you.

Carry on.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Sudbury Star, April 3: If the Leader of the Opposition "is prone to such ill-advised remarks in opposition, voters might well wonder how he can be trusted as Premier."

Globe and Mail, April 1: "The Conservative leader's aggressive attempts to score"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Acting Premier, you can all laugh, but we have said all along that the deletion, destruction and denials were going to be a bigger scandal than the \$1.1-billion gas plant cancellation. It exposes what is at the very core of the Liberal Party. You went to great pains to block any evidence from ever coming forward. You turned over documents; we fought and got more. You deleted emails; we got them restored. You destroyed emails; we called in the OPP.

You've gone to great lengths all along the way to stop us from ever getting to the truth, and now we know why. We learn of widespread deletion of documents in the very office of the Premier. What's so damning that you have to destroy those emails?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, a number of my colleagues have asked for more, and I've got more.

Globe and Mail, April 1: "The Conservative leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to

back them up are reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

Toronto Star, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's premiership."

Globe and Mail editorial, April 1: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is on thin legal ice...."

Globe and Mail, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition's "Reckless Allegations Against Wynne are Reminders of Previous Mistakes."

The reviews speak for themselves. The fact is, this is a serious issue. The OPP are looking into it. Let's allow the OPP to continue their work. It was very clear last Thursday, in the testimony to the committee, that this is about what happened under the previous Premier's watch, and they are simply wrong.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. When did the Liberal government first become aware that the Peter Faist who was working for this Liberal Party was the very same Peter Faist who the OPP information to obtain—who, according to that document, staffers alleged was seen wiping computers in the Premier's Office?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I believe that I answered my colleague's question several days ago. When this court document was made public, a week ago Thursday, we looked into the matter and information came to light about two contracts. We made that information public here in question period; I believe the Premier commented on it in a scrum.

Several days later—I believe it was the Sunday—Mr. Faist's company was told that their services were no longer needed by the Ontario Liberal Party. That has been a matter of public record now for a week or 10 days since this story first broke.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians what the internal investigation found that led the Liberals to distance themselves from Peter Faist more than a year after, according to the OPP information to obtain, staffers alleged they saw him doing work on computers in the Premier's office?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm patient, Mr. Speaker. About 10 days ago, a court document came forward that talked about some of the details of an OPP investigation, an investigation that has been a matter of public record, I believe, for about a year or so. What that court document suggested was that there were allegations, serious yet unproven, against Mr. Livingston, the former chief of staff to the former Premier.

What we have learned over and over again, in both that court document and testimony before the committee, is that there is an ongoing investigation by the OPP. What we also learned, with the advice from the OPP, is that the best thing for us to do is to stop playing amateur hour here in the Legislature, allow the OPP to finish their investigation and reach whatever conclusions they see fit, and then proceed through the justice system if that is the case. The honourable member and his colleagues are being reckless and they're being irresponsible.

#### **EDUCATION FUNDING**

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Education. As the minister knows, one of the issues we've dealt with in high-growth boards such as the Peel District School Board is funding provided for special education through the High Needs Amount. I have spoken with our board and responded to questions from some parents and school councils in the western Mississauga communities of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville. Our concern is with how equitable the high-needs funding is.

Last week at Lisgar Middle School, I spoke with about four dozen parents and educators, along with the chair and the director of education at the Peel District School Board, to discuss special-needs funding provided through Grants for Student Needs. Would the minister provide the House an update on how some of the inequities that existed are being addressed this year and how funding is provided for students with special needs?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his question. We have indeed heard from his community as well as others about the need to address the High Needs Amount for special education through the Grants for Student Needs.

Boards have correctly observed that there are funding inequities because the date on which the old model is based is out of date; we need to update the demographic data. We've been working with education stakeholders and actually a number of outside experts, getting their advice over the last few years on how we can update the spec ed funding model. We are taking their advice, and this year we've introduced a four-year phase-in of a different funding model for high-needs students, which reflects the expert advice. The Peel District School Board, amongst several others, will, in fact, see their High Needs Amount increase.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: As the minister knows, one of the many ways in which we invest in people is to build our education system. The minister has already described one of the ways we support school boards to ensure that they have the resources to deliver a high-quality education for our students.

Another way we invest in education is making sure we have the facilities for that high-quality education to be delivered in. This year, the ministry has approved three new elementary school projects worth more than \$45 million for the Peel District School Board, which serves Mississauga and Brampton. These new schools will add to the 61 schools that are built, planned or under con-

struction in the Peel District School Board and that have received funding since 2003.

Peel region continues to grow rapidly and we need the Ministry of Education to continue to invest in the people choosing to call Peel home. Would the minister explain to the House how funding decisions for capital investments are made?

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Hon. Liz Sandals: As the member noted, I was in the riding next to him recently, in Brampton West, to announce funding for three new schools in the Peel District School Board. That's part of the \$12-billion investment in new schools and major additions that we've made since 2003.

But the process is this: The boards submit their capital requests each October to the ministry. They're required to provide detailed business cases. This year, we received requests for 260 projects worth over \$2.6 billion. What happens is, my ministry goes through those detailed business cases and looks at a number of factors. This year, we were pleased to announce that we're providing funding for 78 capital projects, including 39 new schools, 30 additions and eight renovations in boards all across Ontario.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** My question is to the Ministry of Energy. Minister, we know how deeply involved your predecessor Mr. Bentley was in the gas plants cancellation decision. I want to know your involvement in this file since you have been there over a year.

This is an energy file, and the expertise lies within the Ministry of Energy. I want to know what contribution or critical path you provided to the Premier on the cancellation file. We know your ministry conducted an internal review. What did you find? Were any files deleted in your ministry?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, when I was appointed Minister of Energy approximately a year ago, I devoted all of my time to working on a new long-term energy plan. We did province-wide consultation in every corner, we consulted with First Nations people, and we came forward with an agenda that has been very well accepted by stakeholders across the board, including environmentalists, unions, people in the nuclear sector, renewables and hydro.

My involvement, to be fair to the question, has been zero in terms of my engagement. Everything had taken place beforehand. I was looking to the future and I concentrated all my efforts on having a very effective electricity system in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Again to the minister: Ontario's privacy commissioner has said, "In this day and age, ignorance is no excuse. Transparency of government activities, reflected in their records, is essential to freedom and liberty." I agree with the commissioner: Transparency

and accountability are paramount to delivering good government.

Ontarians still don't know everything about your government's scandal. Minister, how has your office been involved with the OPP investigation? Further, were any files on any computers in your office or your ministry deleted or wiped clean by the accused Liberal Party techie, Mr. Faist?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** Government House leader. *Interjections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's your file.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Dufferin–Caledon will come to order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Quite frankly, I'm very pleased the honourable member mentioned Dr. Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Let me share some quotes—you'll want to hear this—what Dr. Ann Cavoukian said about the current government.

On July 26, 2013, she said, "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things. The government is dedicated to opening up access to government data."

June 25, 2013: "This government, with respect to my investigation and the work that we have done"—

Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

**Hon. John Milloy:** —"has been very forthcoming.... [A]ny co-operation we needed was there."

June 13, 2013: "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff."

June 25, 2013: "I'm pleased now to report that the new government has acted proactively to address the recommendations made in my report."

Mr. Speaker, I will let the words of the Information and Privacy Commissioner speak for themselves.

Interjection

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we go to the next question, the member from Hamilton East— Stoney Creek, come to order.

New question.

# SECURITY AT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario's correctional system is in crisis, with increased violence, persistent overcrowding and class action lawsuits against the government.

Ontarians learned today through FOI that there were 3,000 prisoner-on-prisoner attacks in 2012 to 2013, an increase of 30% from five years ago. This rise in violence comes at the same time as overcrowding in correctional

facilities, with almost half of Ontario's jails above capacity last year alone.

Will this government act now to address the overcrowding and stop the violence in Ontario jails?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the member from London for her question. We have violence in the workplace, but that's why we track statistics like inmate-on-inmate violence: to help us determine if our policy needs to change in order to deliver an effective and efficient correctional service to meet the needs of a changing offender population. As we know, inmates can be difficult at times and unpredictable, so despite best efforts, like I said, violence does occur in our jail facilities.

We have invested approximately \$10 million in new surveillance camera systems in our larger facilities. This is to enhance our monitoring capacity. We have increased staff in our facilities, and we are training new staff to add

in our facilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Obviously, more needs to be done. Too many inmates within our system are released back into the community after experiencing violence in custody, which is not only inhumane, but puts public safety at risk.

During his eight months at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, Glenn Johnson was beaten, stabbed with a pencil and suffered multiple concussions. Some inmates, like Adam Kargus at EMDC, do not live to tell the tale and die during their incarceration.

What will it take for this government to act and address the many issues in Ontario's jails?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** There have been a lot of improvements in our jail system. We have opened two new modern facilities. We are modernizing our old facilities. We stopped the closure of the Sarnia jail. We have added 2,000 new beds into this facility.

We wanted to make sure that both inmates and staff are safe in the workplace. We will continue to improve. We are training new staff. We have hired approximately 200 to 300 correctional officers in 2014, and approximately the same number will be hired in 2015—additional recruits, graduates over the past six months; 188 new recruitments. We will continue to add the tools to be able to keep everyone safe—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

#### LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, last fall your ministry had undertaken a variety of open houses to discuss how best to reform the land use planning system. Residents in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt want our government to ensure that the planning system remains responsive to the changing needs of our communities while ensuring that we support our municipalities, Ontario development and the construction industry.

Many people think about development challenges in downtown Toronto, whereas communities like mine in Scarborough–Agincourt face similar concerns. My residents are also concerned about how development changes affect their community.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please explain to my constituents what our government is doing to ensure they will have a voice on how Scarborough will develop?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. Our government believes in having a strong land use planning system that gives municipalities the tools to manage growth so we can build the cities and towns we want to live, work and raise a family in.

I can understand, however, why your constituents would find the current system a bit difficult to navigate. In fact, we have heard from municipal leaders, planning officials, developers and the public that the rules can be too complex and the delays and appeals too frustrating. That is why our government is moving forward with a refresh of this important system by listening to everyday Ontarians, municipal politicians and community groups at regional workshops, and those workshops were conducted right across the province: Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Mississauga, Toronto, and in my home community of Thunder Bay.

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Speaker, as a result of that, we're looking forward to continuing the work that was done by the former minister to ensure that the land use planning system is going to work for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to hear that our government is giving municipalities the tools to be able to plot their own destiny and build communities that work for the residents. But despite the tools that municipalities have regarding development, projects can still be contentious.

In fact, across Toronto, there are projects that worry the local councillors, the community and even the city planners. They believe that Toronto should be outside of the Ontario Municipal Board.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, though they are sympathetic towards removing the OMB, they worry that this sort of change would make it even more difficult and expensive to challenge projects that they believe are out of place in the community as it would now have to go through the court systems.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain to my constituents the importance of a well-structured land use planning system and the importance of the Ontario Municipal Board?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. We do, of course, understand how important well-planned development is for our communities, and that's why the OMB is so critical. We know the OMB has made decisions from time to time that are contentious in some of our communities, and that's why

during this review our government has listened to constructive ideas surrounding the OMB.

The OMB makes dispute resolution easier, cheaper and faster for community groups and municipalities than the courts—that's important, Speaker; we need to all remember that. It plays an important role in hearing land use appeals, attempting to balance the provincial planning policy with local planning decisions and community interests.

However, suggestions that we have received from the third party about how to reform the planning system are not solutions, Speaker. The proposed changes are haphazard, they are piecemeal, and they would only increase the cost and time spent by community groups and municipalities to appeal planning disputes.

That's why our government can move forward with a land use planning refresh that will deal fairly with all of the communities, from north to south, while ensuring that as our communities grow they remain sustainable, stronger and more vibrant.

#### **GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you may recall that several Liberal cabinet ministers quit last year: Laurel Broten; Margarett Best; your predecessor, Dwight Duncan. Even the Premier jumped ship; so did his staff. The slate was wiped clean. Anyone curious about how much these folks made in severance would naturally check the sunshine list. If they did, they would not find any answers.

Minister, why is your government hiding this salary information? And if it can't get this much right, what else is it hiding?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're not hiding anything. We're the party that brought forward an open transparency act. We are the ones who are disclosing more information than any other government—it's in the public domain.

In fact, C.D. Howe Institute has just ranked Ontario as one of the top governments in Canada for full disclosure and integrity of our numbers. We'll continue to do that. Just read the books; they are there to be seen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary, please?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Minister, the sunshine list is one of Ontario's longest-running measures of government accountability. Three years ago, the sunshine list showed that former eHealth executive and deputy health minister Ron Sapsford took home \$762,000, despite the fact that he had quit the year before.

After that story broke, Premier McGuinty vowed, "We're going to shine a light on all expenses so Ontarians will know who, exactly, is spending what, exactly."

Minister, if you're so dedicated to transparency, why can you not even meet the low bar set by the former Premier?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the sunshine list exists and it's displayed—we tell the public, and we dis-

close the information that's required. We've enhanced our transparency act to provide even further information and greater integrity of the numbers. As I said, C.D. Howe Institute—even Forbes has illustrated Ontario is one of the top jurisdictions, top governments, in the world in terms of its ability to have numbers with great integrity and transparency, and we will continue to do so.

I should remind the member opposite that their own numbers that they've claimed in their platform have not exceeded, have not even met, the targets that we've been able to achieve thus far. We're outpacing that party opposite, who claim that they can do better. Their numbers show that they would do worse.

We'll move ahead and do what's necessary for the benefit of all the people of Ontario.

#### **GO TRANSIT**

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation.

Interjection.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Carry on.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation.

The Niagara region is united in calling for daily GO train service to Niagara Falls. Twelve Niagara mayors and the chamber of commerce have all called on this government to bring GO to Niagara and to make it a top priority, to improve the region's economy. Niagara Falls faces one of the highest unemployment rates in the province. The Niagara regional chair, Gary Burroughs, says GO can be a game-changer for our local economy.

Will the minister commit to a timeline to finally bring GO train service to Niagara?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the question from the honourable member.

We are in the middle of the largest expansion of GO in our history. We have now exceeded \$10 billion of investment in GO, and we have now extended service, as you know. I take that train on the weekend because I cycle in St. Catharines and Niagara.

To move to all-day two-way GO service to Niagara, we have issues of canal crossing, track acquisition, which costs hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars, so we're trying to build that into our plan.

One way the member opposite and his party could help would be supporting the government in its efforts to bring in the new revenue tools so that we can actually pay for a greater extension. We look forward to working with the third party, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to some clarity on their position on funding transit because that's all that's holding us back from doing it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, a petition is circulating in Niagara to bring daily GO train service to Niagara; it already has more than 2,400 signatures. The unemployed and the underemployed in Niagara can't

wait any longer. This government has had years of studies and discussions on bringing daily commuter rail service to Niagara. The time for promises is over. When will this government bring daily commuter GO rail service to Niagara?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We actually have not been studying and studying and studying. We've been investing: \$10 billion—\$14 billion in infrastructure.

I say to the honourable member, because I think we would agree on this, that the party opposite spent \$1.4 billion on infrastructure. We spent \$14 billion. For 30 years in this province, we underinvested in infrastructure. So we are making up for a 30-year backlog.

How do we accelerate what is already the biggest investment in GO and rapid transit in Ontario's history? It takes more money.

We do not have a majority in this House, so we look to our friends in the third party to get greater clarity on a range of revenue tools that they could support with us. We're told by you that you support transit, but it takes more than words; it takes writing a cheque. We need to raise the money to write the cheque, and we look to the member and his party to support us in that effort.

#### **ROAD SAFETY**

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, the warm weather is a welcome change for my constituents in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. It's that time of year when everyone wants to get outside and tour, not only in my community, but in communities across Ontario. With the change in weather, bicycles and running shoes have finally come out of storage. Members of my community are able to tour on foot or on bike and see what Ontario has to offer.

Although the warm weather is welcome, it also raises concerns about cycling and pedestrian safety.

Speaker, I was delighted to hear about the introduction of Bill 173, Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe. Through you to the minister, I'd like to hear what is included in this bill that will help keep my constituents safe as they enjoy this warm weather and tour around communities across Ontario.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** There are two threes in this. One, I want to give credit to all members of this House because this bill contains ideas from both the opposition parties as well as the government.

The other three is not just three parties, but three groups. One: For motorists, this will change the inspection standards and introduce very strong powers for the registrar to make sure that Ontarians are protected from buying substandard used vehicles and to get those unsafe vehicles off the road—a very big priority for motorists. For cyclists, this introduces things like the one-metre rule and dooring, which will actually remove the biggest causes the coroner has told us are risks to the lives of all of us who cycle. It is also really important because this

will allow municipalities a greater range of options with pedestrian crossings and give pedestrians more rights on the road.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time is up for question period.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Etobicoke Centre on a point of order.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to offer a warm welcome to the Trillium Gift of Life Network as they join us today in the Legislature and to encourage every member here to come this evening to a reception at 5:30 in the dining room where you'll have the opportunity to hear from the families that have given and those families that have received.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General, on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I just want to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please go ahead.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** In answering the member from London West, I said something like I agree that there is violence in the workplace. I meant violence in the correctional facilities. Thank you.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member for Nipissing, on a point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

I will briefly summarize the many precedents and arguments that I put forward in my written submission to you this morning. I rise today after providing you with the appropriate notice regarding my intention to stand on a point of privilege for contempt of this Legislature.

Last week, the Ontario PC caucus was given a rollout calendar prepared by the Liberal government's self-proclaimed budget-leaking—

Interjections.

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Do you want me to wait a moment while they leave, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still listening. I'm taking notes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you—the Liberals' self-proclaimed budget-leaking team. It outlined 39 budget policy announcements and \$5.7 billion in additional spending over the course of 27 days in the lead-up to the May budget.

Before rising on a point of privilege, Speaker, I waited to see if this calendar was an accurate portrayal of the government's plan to announce budget initiatives. On Friday, it became clear that this was indeed the case. On Friday, the minister responsible for seniors made the government's first budget announcement regarding the seniors' grant program. This event can be found on page 3 of the document titled Pre-Doc Communications Rollout, or the budget-leaking team, that I gave you.

The issue at hand is what appears to be a coordinated effort by the Liberal government to make budget announcements outside of the Legislature via public relations events. The fact that this government has formed a team of Ministry of Finance officials and labelled them as a "budget-leaking team" demonstrates that the government fully intends on leaking the budget as a public relations stunt.

O'Brien and Bosc describe the budget as "a formal budget presentation, offering a comprehensive assessment of the financial standing of the government and giving an overview of the nation's economic condition." They go on to state, "there is a long-standing tradition of keeping the contents of the budget secret until the Minister of Finance actually presents it in the House."

Unfortunately, under this Liberal government, we have seen budget announcements become more prominent and frequent. These announcements release key components of the budget to the public before the opposition gets to hold the government to account in the Legislature.

Quite frankly, I'm concerned that the government's behaviour is a potential contempt of this Legislature. Speaker, I want to be explicitly clear today. I am not claiming that there was a breach of member's privilege inside the Legislature, but rather I believe that the government's decision to hold public relations events to announce budget initiatives amounts to a contempt of the Legislature because it lessens the role of the Legislature.

Parliamentary experts support this position. O'Brien and Bosc state that: "[A]ll breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege." Erskine May describes contempt as: "[A]ny act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions...." He then goes on to say that: "Indignities offered to the House by words spoken or writings published reflecting on its character or proceedings have been punished by both the Lords and the Commons upon the principle that such acts tend to obstruct the Houses in the performance of their functions by diminishing the respect due to them."

That is why I'm calling on you to intervene in this matter. It is concerning that this Liberal government is more focused on rolling out their budget initiatives outside of the Legislature and diminishing the respect that is due to the function of the House. It's an example of the government ignoring the House and the fact that they are accountable to Ontarians via the MPPs who sit in this assembly. Purposely making budget announcements well in advance of a budget motion or bill being tabled in the House goes against what we do as parliamentarians and what we do in Parliament. The role of parliamentarians is to hold the government accountable. When the government bypasses Parliament, it is an affront to parliamentary democracy.

Finally, I want to draw the Speaker to the precedent from this Legislature which supports my point of privilege. I refer you, Speaker, to Speaker Carr's ruling from May 8, 2003, regarding the government's presentation of the Magna budget. Speaker Carr's ruling focused on the fact that when budgets are presented outside of the House "there is a danger that the representative role of each and every member of this House is undermined, that respect for the institution is diminished, and that Parliament is rendered irrelevant." Carr went on to say: "Parliamentary democracy is not vindicated by the government conducting a generally one-sided public relations event on the budget well in advance of members having an opportunity to hold the government to account for the budget in this chamber." This is precisely what is at issue here. The government has employed a budget-leaking team to make budget announcements to the public long before members of this Legislature see it.

In the Magna case, Carr ruled that a prima facie case of contempt existed because the issue raised too many questions and concerns. In his ruling, he expressed the uneasiness about the road the government was going. He found that, "It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak; it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so."

Speaker, in 2003, Speaker Carr clearly ruled that the Magna budget was a mistake. This is why we were so shocked when the Liberals planned and then executed the same thing over a decade later.

In conclusion, members of this House are concerned with the recent actions by the government not only to employ a budget-leaking team, but to make budgetary announcements in advance of the budget. It is concerning that this has been a growing trend. The government is more focused on media and public relations, rather than being accountable to the members of this Legislature. Announcing budgetary initiatives outside of the Legislature removes the function of our Parliament and our ability to hold the government to account. Any ruling other than a prima facie case of contempt will inevitably lead to even more egregious abuse. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader for the third party.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't want to take a lot of time, but I want to weigh in on this particular point of privilege that's being raised by the member. We need to remember that the main function of what this Legislature is about is the approval of money. That's what this thing is all about. Dating back to the model Parliament of 1295 is when the people—or in those days, the barons and others—decided that you could not allow the King—in this case the executive—the right to spend money and the right to tax without having Parliament do the actual approval. So back to 1295, and that's a pretty long history, there's all kinds of evidence where essentially the executive in this case, but back then the King, is essentially precluded from being able to spend money

and to tax people without the approval of the Legislature. So when you have a government that's essentially out there trying to find ways of getting around announcing things that are, quite frankly, directly related to the budget, it's a diminishment of the role of this House. The members of this House, our large responsibility, if you take a look at what the constitution calls for in regard to the makeup of the Legislature, is to approve the budget and to make sure that we give approval to the taxation—if we decided to do that; in this case we probably wouldn't—or when it comes to expenditures.

When a government is trying to get around the provision of what this Parliament is all about, I think it gives us a responsibility of stepping back and looking at what is really being done here. I would argue that this is, again, just a weakening of what I think is the role and responsibility of this Legislature when a government decides to try to get around what the responsibility of the Legislature is, and I would ask you to give this all due consideration.

Hon. John Milloy: I am pleased to respond on behalf of the government. Mr. Speaker, I've had a chance to review the presentation that was sent by the member from Nipissing to myself and the other House leaders several hours ago. I would argue that the point of privilege he has raised is completely without merit. The presentation has confused the concept of budget secrecy, which is a political convention, with the presentation of a budget outside of the House. The former does not give rise to contempt.

Previous Speakers' rulings confirm that budget secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention and not a matter of privilege. In one example that I'll share with you, Sauvé noted that a breach of budget secrecy has "no impact on the privileges of a member." She went on to say that "it has to do with the conduct of a minister in the exercise of his administrative responsibility."

In a May 9, 1983, ruling, the Speaker of this House noted, "I have been unable to find any precedent which states that the matter of budget secrecy is one which may be treated as a question of privilege." The Speaker went on to say, "Budget secrecy is a political convention, as is the practice that the Treasurer presents his budget in the House before discussing it in any other public forum. It has nothing to do with parliamentary privilege."

Indeed, prior rulings make it clear that it is appropriate to announce policy and publish material for consultation, and take reasonable planning measures in advance of the passage of legislation, provided that it does not adversely impact the legislative process or rights of the members in the legislative process.

On February 22, 2005, in this Legislature, Speaker Curling stated the following when ruling on a similar motion: "There is nothing wrong with anticipation per se—it happens a lot; the issue is whether the announcement goes further and reflects adversely on the parliamentary process." He went on to say, "In my opinion, the wording and the tone of the documents are not dismissive

of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, they indicate that the government had plans and proposals that require not only negotiation, but also the introduction and passage of legislation. In particular, the board letter and press release contain conditional phrases such as 'intends to introduce legislation,' 'we are proposing,' and 'legislation that, if passed." That's the end of the excerpt from Speaker Curling's ruling that I wanted to share.

The only case cited by the member from Nipissing that relates to the budget process is, of course, the May 8, 2003, prima facie finding of contempt made by Speaker Gary Carr. In that case, the member's own party presented a budget speech in a private facility during a time when the House was prorogued. This is obviously an entirely different set of circumstances. There has not been any attempt or intention to deliver the budget speech for this particular budget outside of this House. The Minister of Finance fully intends to deliver the budget speech in the House in the normal course.

I close on this: It is important to note that it was the PCs who first made the information that is the subject of this point of privilege public. So if the member truly believes that presenting this information before the formal introduction of the budget is a matter of contempt, why would he be so quick to make it public? It's clear that the point of privilege which the member from Nipissing raises is without merit.

I, of course, Mr. Speaker, will provide you with the references that I have raised today, as well as to my colleagues in the other parties.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I would just point out, and I do this respectfully, but the honourable House leader for the government side hinges his argument on a point of privilege—I assume of an individual member. We are seeking a prima facie case of contempt of the House. As you know from precedent, there is a great distinction. I would just remind you of page 2 of our submission and ask you to seriously consider that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their contribution and discussion on this particular topic. I will reserve my ruling for a later date in order to devote some time to this and to ensure the ruling is appropriate.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1300.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** It is my honour today to welcome Théophile Rwigimba and members of the Rwandan Diaspora in Toronto on this solemn occasion.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to introduce Bill Miller, who is here from Georgetown and who is the president of the Georgetown Highland Games, held in June every year. It is a wonderful occasion that we should all take advantage of.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### CONNECTING LINK PROGRAM

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Suppose I bought a new car and sent you the bill for all the repairs. Likewise, municipalities are calling out this government for demanding that they foot the bill to maintain provincial roads and bridges. For decades, governments of all parties have agreed that wouldn't be fair. But then the McGuinty-Wynne government came along and scrapped the Connecting Link Program.

I have raised this issue with two Premiers and two Ministers of Transportation to support the municipalities I represent. In response, the government bragged about its MIII program, as if it were somehow a replacement for Connecting Link; it's not.

The township of Wellington North faces over \$1 million in repairs to the Rick Hopkins Bridge. Most of the traffic on that bridge is not from Wellington North. Connecting Link used to acknowledge that and would have covered 90% of the cost. But now the local tax-payers could be on the hook for a 4% tax hike.

At ROMA, I supported West Perth in its discussion with the Minister of Transportation regarding the Blanchard Bridge. It's expected to need over \$700,000 in repairs. But they are also getting no help at all from this government to pay for upkeep to a provincial bridge.

The government needs to admit the damage they are doing to infrastructure in rural Ontario and take another look at Connecting Link. They need to stop punishing rural Ontario for their own mistakes.

#### ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Back in March, several organizations in the London area were awarded Ontario Trillium Foundation community grants, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge these groups.

The Alzheimer Society will use the grant to launch three new recreational programs for people living with dementia.

The Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre is investing in community engagement to address and find solutions to a lack of access to fresh food in the Hamilton Road area.

The Holy Cross Romanian Orthodox Parish of London, the London Community Players and the Thistle Lawn Bowling Club will be upgrading their respective buildings' infrastructure.

The Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration is developing and implementing a model for social service responses to new immigrant families' safety issues.

The Pillar Nonprofit Network will equip and staff a space for community leaders to create and foster new social innovations.

ReForest London will be engaging 48,000 volunteers to plant 15,000 trees as part of their Million Tree Challenge.

St. Joseph's Hospice plans to hire a spiritual care coordinator to assist clients and families coping with endof-life issues.

The UWO Research and Development Park will help entrepreneurs and researchers develop their ideas into prototypes.

Finally, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority will restore and protect the Dorchester Mill Pond ecosystem.

I would like to congratulate all these local organizations for their receipt of the Trillium grants, which will allow them to advance their contributions to a healthy, innovative and eco-friendly London community.

#### DIABETES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I want to inform the House about an important event that took place just down the hall from this chamber. This afternoon, members of the Canadian Diabetes Association attended Queen's Park for the unveiling of their Diabetes Charter for Canada.

This charter gives a strong voice to the nine million Canadians living with diabetes or pre-diabetes. In our own province, nearly one in 10 individuals lives with this disease. A further one in five has pre-diabetes. The numbers are growing rapidly, and a disproportionate number of them come from certain communities, like the South Asian community or the native Canadian community.

The Diabetes Charter for Canada outlines a set of rights held by all those who suffer from diabetes and calls for timely diagnosis followed by education and patient-centred care. This aligns with our government's transformation of health care. With our Ontario Diabetes Strategy and initiatives like health links, we are driving change that will wrap interdisciplinary care around patients and further empower diabetic Ontarians.

I want to congratulate the Canadian Diabetes Association on their achievement and thank them for the work they do every day. Their work touches every single one of us.

#### TARTAN DAY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise on the occasion of Tartan Day, which was celebrated on April 6, not only by Ontario but all of Canada and the USA. It was on April 6, 1320, that the charter of Scottish independence, known as the Declaration of Arbroath, was signed by King Robert the Bruce and his nobles.

On April 6, we pay tribute to the enduring Scottish legacy to Canada's foundation and development as a country. Scottish Canadians made a lasting contribution to Ontario through agriculture, which we celebrate during Agriculture Week. They helped establish our Legislative Assembly, academic institutions such as the University of Toronto, hospitals and new communities throughout

the province. Scotland's emblems are well represented in the Canadian coat of arms with the thistle, the cross of St. Andrew and the royal lion rampant, which is also above your head, Mr. Speaker.

It was my colleague from the Ontario PC caucus, the former MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch, who established Ontario Tartan Day in the year 2000. I am proud to wear the Ontario tartan today, whose three shades of green represent Ontario's forests and fields; the blue, its water; and the white, the clouds of the sky.

This year, I have the honour and privilege to be the honorary chieftain of the 39th annual Georgetown Highland Games and Scottish festival, to which I invite all members of the House and, indeed, all those people who are listening. I would encourage you to come and enjoy it. If you've ever heard 300 bagpipes and 200 drums coming at you across a field; if you've ever seen them toss the caber and hammer and enjoyed the Scottish dancing and the dog trials, Georgetown is the place to be for the Scottish festival games. It will be a magnificent afternoon.

# ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, as we have discussed, I will be asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence at the end of statements.

Today is the date, April 7, that marks the 20th anniversary of the launch of the genocide against the Tutsis of Rwanda, recognized by them and globally as Kwibuka20. Kwibuka is the Kinyarwanda word for "remember."

As part of the past ceremonies of Kwibuka, survivors have spoken movingly of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide. As horrible as the experiences were for those who died during them or lived through them, they are even more painful because they were preventable. Rwandans died while the international community looked the other way or was actively complicit.

The facts are staggering. As cited by MP Irwin Cotler, in "less than 100 days, beginning on April 7, 1994, one million Rwandans, mostly ethnic Tutsis, were slaughtered, victims of a government-orchestrated campaign of incendiary incitement and unspeakable violence."

Members of the Rwandan community are here with us today to commemorate this somber occasion, to remind us that terrible wrongs can arise out of intolerance, hatred and racism.

I ask this House for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to commemorate all those who were lost and to carry forward the memory of what they went through so we can avoid such genocides in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Tabuns is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence after members' statements to signal our concern regarding the Rwandan issue. Do we agree? Agreed. We thank the member for that.

#### **ENERGY CONSERVATION**

Mr. Phil McNeely: On March 29, Ontarians and people around the world observed Earth Hour by turning off their lights and other electrical devices. This is a simple step that reminds us that we can all do our part to conserve energy and address climate change.

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Other jurisdictions are taking meaningful action to do just that. In 2013, China installed more electricity-generating capacity powered by renewables—just under 60%—than from fossil fuels and nuclear. China is on track to be getting 15% of its total energy production from renewables by 2020—I believe, an investment of \$50 billion.

Wind is now competitive with other sources of electricity production, without considering the cost of carbon.

Solar has been coming down in price and is already competitive in many applications, without considering the health and environmental benefits.

The new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report is full of new warnings about climate change as we see the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere rise above 400 parts per million, reductions in arctic summer ice coverage, and increases in storm intensities and droughts. We cannot help but think of the future of our children and grandchildren and our beautiful environment.

Ontario is the first national or subnational government to get out of coal production of electricity, and our target for renewable energy of 10% is a realistic one. We should be proud of our record.

Even with Ontario's action and important action by other provinces, Canada, under the Conservative government, has the worst record for greenhouse gases in all the Western world. How will they explain to their children and grandchildren their opposition to all things green?

#### WORLD HEALTH DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to stand today to recognize World Health Day. Each year, World Health Day draws attention to an issue of major importance to global public health. This year's theme is vector-borne diseases. Common vectors include mosquitoes, sandflies and other bugs and insects, which carry a range of parasites and pathogens that can cause many different illnesses. The most deadly vector-borne disease is malaria, but in Ontario we might be more familiar with West Nile, another vector-borne disease.

The goal of this year's World Health Day campaign is to promote better protection from vector-borne diseases, especially for people living in places where they are a threat and for people travelling to countries where they may be at risk. The good news is that most vector-borne diseases are preventable.

I encourage Ontarians travelling to at-risk areas to research and take the appropriate preventive measures, such as sleeping under a bed net, wearing long-sleeved clothing, taking appropriate medications and using insect repellent.

#### ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: As we all know, April is Be a Donor Month. To give a donation of an organ and tissue is to give a gift of life. One donor can save up to eight lives and enhance 75 others through tissue donation. Currently, 1,500 Ontarians are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. Every three days, one of them dies.

Donor registration helps save lives, as most families consent to organ donation when their loved ones are registered. Donor registration can be done easily online at beadonor.ca. Twenty-four per cent of Ontarians are actually registered. The registration rates among GTA residents are much lower, at 15%. To help save more lives, the Trillium Gift of Life Network has set an ambitious target to reach one million registered donors in the inner GTA.

I encourage all to join. The Trillium Gift of Life Network is hosting a reception today at 5:30 in the legislative dining room. I encourage all members to join.

#### VIMY RIDGE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to give tribute to this Wednesday, April 9, celebrating the 97th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge. This battle is commonly highlighted as a turning point in Canadian history, where four Canadian divisions fought together as a unified force for the first time. Three thousand, five hundred and ninety-eight Canadian soldiers' lives were lost.

The Vimy Foundation, founded in 2005, is a national, bilingual foundation. Its mission is to preserve and promote Canada's role in the First World War, a legacy of symbols, the most important one being the victory at Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917.

The foundation itself is spreading awareness through its domestic and overseas educational and scholarship programs, distributing Vimy pins and Vimy pilgrimage medals, promoting greater recognition of April 9 as Vimy day, and planning events for the 100th anniversary of the battle itself and, this year, the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

In my riding, Uxbridge native Colonel Sam Sharpe led the 116th Battalion at Vimy Ridge and holds the distinction of being a sitting member of Parliament while serving in Europe. Also, he was a Conservative member under the Borden government in what was known then as the riding of Ontario North, now Durham. My son, Erin O'Toole, also served in the Canadian Armed Forces as one of the original founding members of the Vimy Foundation and now serves as an MP for the very same riding as Sam Sharpe.

Today, also in my riding, Dave Robinson, a retired history teacher from Port Perry, serves on the Vimy board. Every year, he leads pilgrimages of thousands of students to Vimy.

My final remark is that the Vimy Foundation reminds us all as Canadians to remember.

# ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have unanimous consent to express a moment of silence to remember the lost lives in Rwanda, I would ask all members and guests to rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): God rest their souls. Thank you.

#### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### VICTIMS OF CRIME VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, which is being commemorated across Ontario and the country this week.

The national theme for 2014 is: "Taking Action." This theme reminds all Canadians that across the country countless dedicated professionals and volunteers continue to take action to support victims of crime every day in an effort to lessen victims' trauma and help them move forward with their lives.

Notre gouvernement est réputé, bien au-delà des limites de notre province, pour son engagement à aider les victimes d'actes criminels.

Nous sommes connus pour nos programmes d'avantgarde, en constante évolution, et pour la façon dont nous tirons parti des recherches et connaissances les plus récentes afin d'aider les victimes à surmonter leur traumatisme et à guérir.

Nous investissons dans les programmes importants qui viennent en aide à des milliers de victimes d'actes criminels en Ontario.

Our government's commitment to helping victims of crime is recognized far and wide. We are known for our innovative programs that are always evolving and for taking advantage of the most recent research and knowledge to help victims overcome trauma and strive for healing.

We invest in the delivery of important programs that assist thousands of victims of crime across Ontario. Services are available for all victims of violent crimes, including homicide, assault, domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, hate crimes and human trafficking. 1320

One example is Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services, which provides immediate on-site support services 24/7, delivered by 47 community agencies across the province.

Our ministry staff delivers the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, providing information, assistance and support to victims and witnesses of violent crime throughout the criminal court process.

We also offer specialized support and services, such as:

- —help for children who may be victims of online sexual abuse;
- —counselling support and a dedicated 24-hour crisis information line;
- —specialized services and counselling for male survivors of sexual abuse:
- —financial and court-based supports to help victims and families of homicide victims participate more fully in the criminal court process;
- —assistance with emergency and funeral expenses, as well as crime scene cleanup services; and
- —personal safety plans, and, where appropriate, cellular telephones for at-risk eligible victims.

Through our Domestic Violence Court Program, the ministry's victim services staff work together with crown prosecutors, police and others to help us reach our goal of breaking the cycle of violence.

Our government recognizes the unique challenges faced by victims in aboriginal communities. A new, community-based, culturally relevant service supporting victims in remote aboriginal communities in northeast Ontario is now in place in eight communities on the James and Hudson Bay coast.

But even the best program we can develop would achieve little or nothing without the thousands of highly skilled and dedicated people who serve victims of crime on a daily basis. Across Ontario, thousands of volunteers and professionals offer their knowledge, support and advice to victims. They demonstrate compassion and respect. They demonstrate commitment and perseverance, helping victims where and when help is needed most.

Some have been victims of crime themselves and have yet found the strength to work as advocates, raising the profile of victims' issues. In doing so, these courageous people are not only forging a better future for themselves, but for their families, friends and communities for future generations. We owe all of these people a great debt of gratitude.

One way we recognize these people and their tremendous efforts is through the Attorney General's Victim Services Award of Distinction. I will have the honour of presenting these awards to some of these individuals this Thursday. You will be able to welcome this year's recipients when I introduce them here following the presentation ceremony. The awards are a small but important way we can recognize excellence in victims' services.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, our commitment is clear. We will continue our work of improving services for victims of crime, funding effective programs and finding new and innovative ways to help communities across Ontario share new skills and best practices to ensure we remain a leader in the area of victims' services.

En Ontario, nous avons tous la responsabilité individuelle de nous renseigner sur la situation des victimes d'actes criminels et de contribuer à bâtir des

collectivités plus fortes, qui offrent l'aide et le soutien dont ont besoin les victimes d'actes criminels.

Je sais que tous les membres de cette Assemblée continueront à soutenir les victimes d'actes criminels et rendront hommage aux contributions des victimes et de tous ceux et celles qui se dévouent pour les aider, partout dans la province.

Everyone in Ontario has the responsibility to learn about the issues that affect victims of crime and to help build stronger communities that offer the help and support they need.

I know that all members of the House will continue to support victims of crime, and will honour the contributions made across the province by victims and those who work to help them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** It's my pleasure to be able to respond on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus on the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2014.

In my role, it is obviously a responsibility to look at responding to the Attorney General's statement today in recognition of the beginning of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. First of all, as I think most of us would do when researching, I checked the government website. I wanted to make sure that I understood any new initiatives or anything that was on the website that we should be commenting on today.

Well, I discovered that the government's website has not been updated for three years. The most recent information is from 2011, announcing the sixth annual awareness week. This is actually the ninth year of awareness for victims of crime.

On the website was the message from two ministers ago; this was the welcoming message. He hasn't sat in the House for over a year.

The next thing I did was look through the different aspects of that website, thinking that maybe it was only an oversight at the beginning. I went to something called the "resources for victims" page, and when I got there, the message says, "Page does not exist." I then went to a calendar page for a listing of events for victims. In this 2011 version, it has the list of people who have been nominated for awards. Instead, when you go to the calendar page, it says to check back in 2012.

I was shocked at this, quite frankly. Obviously, in listening to the minister—I would say perhaps she doesn't know about this, but certainly it doesn't fit with the message that I think she would like us to have.

Fortunately, I don't have to rely on the government to provide me with a little background on victims' services, because I remember when the Victims' Bill of Rights was adopted by the Progressive Conservative government in 1996.

In fact, one of the things I particularly remember about that legislative agenda was the fact that York region was one of the first areas to be leaders in victims' services when the Victim/Witness Assistance Program began. I can remember being there for the opening, and I can

remember being invited to other occasions when they celebrated the volunteer component of that program. It was certainly something that, as citizens and as MPPs, we could be very proud of.

Ontario led the way to support victims of crime. I think that it's important to look at some of the parts of that that were included in the original 1996 legislation, some principles that today we would see as something that is hard to imagine has to be a law: The victims are treated with courtesy, compassion and respect for their personal dignity and privacy, have access to information concerning services and remedies available to victims, and have access to information about the process of criminal investigations and prosecutions.

I know that just last week the federal government introduced a victims' bill of rights for all of Canada, about which we can certainly be very proud, but I think that we also need to look at our own situation here in Ontario, beyond that of the website.

I have a constituent who has currently been through a horrific experience where she was a passenger. She was very seriously injured and had to be airlifted. The driver died; it was a fatality. She has been asked to come to court five times to deliver a victim impact statement, and five times she has prepared herself for this very difficult emotional experience and has been postponed. We gave a long way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses? Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am proud to rise today on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to share my comments regarding the ninth annual Victims of Crime Awareness Week. This year's theme is "Taking Action."

I want to begin with acknowledging the reality that there are far too many victims of crime in our province and, in fact, our country. These victims of crime are faced with various types of crimes that have lasting impacts on themselves and their families; these range from crimes of violence—both physical and sexual—to crimes that involve exploitation.

I want to particularly acknowledge the tremendous work of the extremely dedicated and skilled front-line service providers. They provide assistance on a front-line basis to those victims of crime, and they do so in various programs throughout the province. Some of them fall under the title of victim assistance programs. They are very talented people who are very dedicated to providing services, and I want to acknowledge them as well.

While we look at the impacts on the victims of crime, we must ensure as a government that there are resources provided, to ensure that they are able to recover. That involves rehabilitation in terms of counselling.

It is also important, when we look at victims of crime and our resources that we dedicate to ensuring that they have some level of protection and assistance from the government, that we look at their needs and their desires. Particularly when it comes to the criminal prosecution of offences, many victims of crimes feel alienated. They feel that they don't have a say in the direction that the

prosecution takes. They don't feel that the prosecution is considering what benefits their lives.

It's very important, and I implore this government—and all members of this House—to reflect on the needs of victims of crime in terms of what they see would benefit their own lives, and to ensure that we take into consideration their input when making decisions on what the next steps are for criminal prosecution.

I also think it's of extreme importance that—while we talk about the victims of crime, the resources that they need and that as a government the services that we must provide—we also need to pay some attention to the roots of crime and that, in addressing the roots of crime, we ensure that we make decisions based on evidence.

An emotional reaction to a problem will not solve the problem for the victims, nor will it solve the problem for our society. We have to ensure that the decisions we make to prevent crime, to get to the roots of crime, are based on sound evidence and sound facts. Policies that are developed without facts, based on irrational emotion, will not benefit our societies and will not benefit our victims. We have to ensure that we do that with our system, with our society and with our policies moving forward.

I think it's of crucial importance to acknowledge that many folks who are victims of crime are now becoming victims of exploitation. We've seen very recently that, as our society is aging, seniors are now a growing demographic that are being exploited. Very recently, we saw a very troubling case where a senior was exploited and defrauded of her entire life's savings. Those victims who are most vulnerable in our society need the most protection; moving forward, we realize and we'll see that elders are going to be a portion of our society who are among the highest needs.

In addition to that, we need to look at the realities that, in a society where the victims of crime are predominantly women and children and seniors now, as a growing demographic—the victims of crime are really just a depiction of an imbalance of power. A society where women, children and seniors do not have power, are not afforded opportunities and resources—the reality is that the imbalance of power is demonstrated in the fact that they are overrepresented in terms of being victims of crime. So the deeper question is, what can we do as a society to address the imbalance of power that exists, that is one of the root causes for crimes against those vulnerable people? Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members of the assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

#### **PETITIONS**

#### PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oshawa-Whitby.

**Mrs.** Christine Elliott: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I certainly agree with this petition and I'm pleased to affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member; I should have said Whitby-Oshawa, not Oshawa-Whitby, so I got it right.

#### **HYDRO RATES**

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it with page Bani to the desk.

#### CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Cindy Forster: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved a new funding formula within a fixed funding envelope for children's aid societies which are mandated by legislation to provide child protection services;

"Whereas this new 'fairer' funding model has resulted in a \$50.6-million funding shortfall for agencies across Ontario for 2013-14 and, due to inadequate funding and the introduction of 'accountability measures' which prevent agencies from running deficits, agencies will be forced to balance budgets by cutting staff and services;

"Whereas the \$2.3-million provincial funding shortfall for Family and Children's Services Niagara for 2013 alone has led to the recent announcement of the closure of the Regional Adolescent Centre, a youth home and treatment centre for youth who need supports to stabilize their situation to help them make successful transition back to the community, a foster family, their family of origin or independent living;

"Whereas the closure of the Regional Adolescent Centre will force a situation in which there will be fewer beds for kids in need of specialized supports in the community, foster parents will not have access to the RAC for respite care, kids in treatment currently may be required to go out of the community to receive supports and over 40 workers will lose their jobs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government fund the \$50.6-million funding shortfall, fix the funding formula to ensure that agencies can maintain services including prevention services, and put an immediate halt to the closure of the Regional Adolescent Centre in Welland and other staffing cuts that hurt services."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

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#### FISHING REGULATIONS

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

"Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in" more "remote areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years' quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I affix my signature in full support.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Todd Smith:** I'm presenting this on behalf of Barry Gaebel of the Bancroft area, who is living with IPF.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in

lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I support this petition and will sign it and send it to the

table.

#### LYME DISEASE

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly

in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize

testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature, and send it to the table with Callista.

#### MARKDALE HOSPITAL

**Mr. Bill Walker:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I fully support this and will send it with a great page from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: Calvin Devries.

#### AIR OUALITY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emissions control technologies; and

"Whereas, from 1999 to 2010, the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and "Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails', which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Mira.

#### **USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to ask the member for Etobicoke North if his petition has been certified by the table.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I do thank you, Speaker, for not only the recognition, but I am very pleased to certify that my petition has been duly recognized, honoured and, I think, even endorsed by—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize, then, the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you. I have a petition here, Speaker, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiplepoint data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a muchneeded modernization of the conduct of parliamentary

business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario."

I fully agree with this highly certified and endorsed petition, Speaker, and send it to you via page Eli.

#### PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of Mr. Jim McEwen, who is a stroke-suffering patient, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to provide the service themselves:

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded, post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to sign and support and present it to Nusaybah.

#### RANKED BALLOTING

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—I have a petition:

"Whereas, on June 11, 2013, Toronto city council passed a motion requesting a ranked ballot for municipal elections; and

"Whereas Bill 166 will strengthen local democracy within the city of Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, which was introduced by Mitzie Hunter, MPP (Scarborough–Guildwood) and passed second reading on March 6, 2014."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Bani.

1350

#### WIND TURBINES

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third-party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third-party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support" initiatives by MPP Lisa Thompson and "call for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third-party health and environmental study has been completed."

I actually agree with this petition, affix my signature and I'll send it to the table.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Mrs. Sandals moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education to lead off the debate.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm proud to stand in the House today to speak in support of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014. Our government rises in favour of this bill that will, if passed, provide an innovative, made-in-Ontario approach to collective

bargaining in the school board sector. It would establish an improved legal framework for conducting negotiations, and it would ensure that we have a clearer process with more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all participants involved throughout the collective bargaining process. It would also build on our commitment to restore and maintain strong relationships with our education partners and, above all, to move forward.

Since I was first appointed Minister of Education, Speaker, this has been my number one priority: Namely, to restore the relationships we have with our education sector partners and build on the success of our worldclass education system.

This important bill is a critical next step in the great progress we have already made. With a clearer and more consistent labour framework in place, we will have a process that works for all participants involved. That is why we worked so closely with stakeholders to develop this necessary legislation and to pass a number of amendments through committee. Feedback from our education sector partners was instrumental during this legislative committee process.

I want to thank my parliamentary assistant, Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: A good member.

Hon. Liz Sandals: A very good member—for his commitment and dedication during the legislative committee process and for moving this important legislation forward. I also want to thank members of this House who participated in the committee process and brought their voices to this discussion. I want to thank my critics, and in particular I want to thank the member from Toronto—Danforth for his co-operation in sorting out all the amendments so effectively.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Also a good member. Hon. Liz Sandals: Also a good member.

During the time between introduction of the legislation and the committee process, our education sector partners asked for amendments. Speaker, we listened and responded to our partners. Their direct input resulted in a revised Bill 122 that would, once negotiations begin, ensure a fair and effective collective bargaining process for everyone involved. That's why the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act is necessary. This important legislation would put a clearer and more consistent framework in place. It would enshrine the crown's duty to bargain in good faith, and it would formalize a process that has been, to date, informal and voluntary. Simply put, the current informal, voluntary process is outdated. It does not reflect today's complexities and realities, and our education system needs an improved model for collective bargaining. For years, the province has been the sole funder of the education system but without a formal, legally enshrined role during negotiations. This arrangement no longer makes sense. It is not sustainable, and frankly, it needs to change.

At one time, this ad hoc process worked: when investments in education were increasing. But we are currently facing fiscal restraints, and we need a process that can weather the significant challenges of our current economic climate. That is why we need this groundbreaking legislation. It will replace a voluntary process with a clear legal framework and with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all parties during negotiations. It will also make it mandatory for the government, as the funder of public education in Ontario, to have a prescribed role where it participates at every central table during collective bargaining.

It is also essential that we pass Bill 122 quickly, since virtually all collective agreements in the education sector expire in August of this year. The next round of bargaining is upon us, and a model that stipulates the government's role at the central table will be of vital importance.

Just as importantly, Bill 122 sets out the roles of the trustees' associations representing school boards as employer bargaining agencies and provincial unions representing employees as their bargaining agencies.

Before I go any further, I want to be clear about our efforts to consult on this legislation and work together with our education sector partners. As I mentioned before, we worked closely and diligently with stakeholders to develop this legislation and make amendments. We received invaluable feedback on this bill once it was tabled. Through the legislative committee process, this input from the sector was used to fine-tune the legislation in the true spirit of collegiality and collaboration.

I would like to recognize the feedback we received and explain how we have amended this groundbreaking bill. The proposed bill completed clause-by-clause consideration on April 2, and the following amendments have now been included. It clarifies the crown's roles and obligations in bargaining at a central table. It makes it mandatory for the crown to participate in collective bargaining at every central table. It makes it clear that the duties as well as the rights and privileges of the crown would be enforceable at the Ontario Labour Relations Board, including a duty to bargain in good faith. It removes the minister's unilateral discretion to reserve matters to the central table.

We are proud that, in working with our partners, we have developed what would be a made-in-Ontario legislative model. In other words, it is a framework that incorporates invaluable feedback and is the result of constant dialogue to create a guide for collective bargaining in the sector.

Another amendment gives the government and trustee associations the duty to co-operate with each other when preparing for and conducting central bargaining. Again, co-operation and collaboration is a hallmark of this legislation.

Another important set of amendments concerns bargaining for support staff unions. The amendments give any single support staff union that represents 15 support staff units or more the right to access a central table, provided that it represents a double two-thirds majority. That is to say, the union must represent at least two thirds

of all of its bargaining units and two thirds of all employees in all of its bargaining units at the central table.

As you can tell, I've got a cold.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Do you want me to continue?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** No, I'll keep going for a few minutes. But if I suddenly hand off sharing my time with my colleague here, you'll know what has happened.

1400

Interjections.

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** He was offering medical help. If you can make the cold go away, that would be wonderful.

Regarding French-language teachers: Another amendment establishes a single central table for French-language teachers, with both French public and French Catholic boards at the same table.

Another key piece that came out of the committee process, resulting in an important amendment, concerns the scope of central bargaining. I want to draw particular attention to this change, which has been amended to allow parties at the central table, along with the government, to freely negotiate issues that will be bargained centrally. It does so by removing the Minister of Education's unilateral discretion to reserve matters to the central table. This is something that we heard during consultations from stakeholders, and we listened.

Because of this, a further amendment will improve and expedite the process to resolve disputes over what matters are negotiated at the central table versus the local tables. This change prohibits strikes or lockouts related to disputes over the central and local split of issues, but the central parties and the government would then be able to raise any such distributes over which issues are at the central table with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

This brings me to another key amendment, which relates to the terms of any negotiated settlement. The amendment establishes a three-year standardized term for collective agreements in the education sector; however, it also allows the Minister of Education to vary the term from two years to four years, but only after consulting with the central parties across the sector.

By maintaining consistent lengths for collective agreements, we can ensure orderly bargaining at the central tables; common end dates for agreements; and stability for the education sector in between bargaining rounds. Again, this will help maintain education sector peace in between the actual collective bargaining rounds.

Finally, we also listened to our stakeholders and amended the section related to the arbitration of central grievances. This amendment allows for full remedial authority by a central grievance arbitrator. At the same time, this allows for local arbitration and settlements to continue to resolve local disputes that involve central terms. This amendment shows that the government is committed to creating an efficient and effective procedure for the arbitration of central grievances.

Speaker, as you can see, the feedback from our education partners has been respected, and it is reflected in this bill through these amendments. This shows that

we listened and responded in a positive, respectful way. Again, we are committed to a collaborative process where we have the duty to bargain in good faith. This will ensure that all parties involved in collective bargaining can work together, focus on our shared goals of higher levels of student achievement and student wellbeing, and increase public confidence in publicly funded education.

Now that I have demonstrated how we have fine-tuned this bill with the help of stakeholders, I would also like to emphasize why this legislation is so important. If passed, this framework for labour negotiations would establish two processes for negotiations: central tables for significant province-wide issues, and local tables to address local issues. Negotiations would take place at each level, guaranteeing that all issues, whether large or small, would be discussed in a consistent and focused way.

At central tables, the government and provincial trustees' associations would bargain in concert together. Employees would be represented, of course, by teacher federations or education sector worker unions. Similarly, the legislation respects local bargaining, where local issues would continue to be bargained by local school boards and local employee representatives.

Finally, collective agreements would include the provisions of the central agreements for the central terms combined with the local agreements for the local terms. Again, this would, for the first time in Ontario, enshrine a legally defined, mandatory role for government at central tables.

One of the more groundbreaking parts of this legislation is three-way ratification for central bargaining. In other words, all three participants—the government, the trustees' associations, and the teacher federations or the education worker unions, as the case may be—have to agree to the central settlement; that is, each of the three parties has to agree to ratify the central settlement. This is important to note because without this consensus of all three parties, no central settlement can be reached. Speaker, we can confidently call this a made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining. No other province quite has this approach to three-way ratification, although many provinces do, in fact, have central bargaining.

This innovative legislation shows that we heard our education partners who asked for more clarity, more consistency and more accountability during the collective bargaining process, and that is what we, indeed, are delivering with this legislation.

Speaker, increased accountability will extend beyond the next round of negotiations. That is because the government is committed to a review with our partners after the next round of collective bargaining. This reflects our willingness to engage in collective problem-solving, since any new legislation—when you have that, you always have a bit of a learning curve. So we understand that we may need to fine-tune some aspects of the legislation. We recognize there may be some issues that would need to be looked at down the road or require further clarification.

The success of this new framework is very important to our government. If this legislation passes, we will be at the central table, and we will see first-hand what is working and what can be tweaked in the future, if necessary, to make it even better.

Speaker, through much debate in this House over many months, I've explained why this legislation is so necessary. As I mentioned, the previous process for collective bargaining was voluntary and created major challenges. We need a new model whereby everyone has a more clearly defined role at a centralized table and where the parties and the crown have a duty to bargain in good faith.

We are also faced with fiscal realities. School boards no longer have taxation powers, and we are in a period when education investments are not increasing dramatically, as they did in the past.

So we need a new framework that allows us to tackle these challenges with a creative and collaborative approach.

Speaker, as I've said, the next round of bargaining is just around the corner. Virtually all contracts in the education sector expire at the end of this August. That means the collective bargaining process needs to begin very soon.

In light of this tight time frame, it is imperative that this House pass the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act and that we do so quickly. All participants at the new centralized bargaining table will need sufficient lead time to help implement the provisions in this bill. That will be essential to the success of this groundbreaking legislation. As such, I urge all MPPs in this House to rise and support this bill. By passing this important legislation, we can put in place a made-in-Ontario approach to guide collective bargaining in the education sector.

It's clear that we need a collective bargaining process that ensures all participants have clearer roles and responsibilities. In this regard, we do need the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, and it's in everyone's best interests that we pass this legislation and that we are properly prepared to enter into the next round of collective bargaining; because ultimately, our ability to enter into collective bargaining is what determines our ability to be in classrooms, teaching our children.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to discuss this very important piece of legislation. I do want to begin my remarks by perhaps commenting on some of the things the minister has stated in her remarks.

The first thing I would say is that her desire is to pass this legislation quickly. Certainly, the speed at which we will be passing this legislation is lightning speed. We are literally at the final hour of debating this bill, and each party has only 20 minutes to speak to this particular piece of legislation. We aren't even able to have some questions and comments where we can come back to debate

these very issues that are important to the strength of our education system.

I sat and listened to the minister with interest to see what she would have to say. I have to say that her presentation was highly technical. She talked about negotiations. She talked about process. What I am concerned about is that she failed to talk about how all this translates to moms and dads and their kids, right across the province of Ontario. They want to know what this bill means to them. They want to know what's in it for them.

Each and every day I stand in this Legislature and listen to this government talk about education. It's evident and very clear that when they talk about partners of education, they're talking about the teacher federations; they're talking about certain interest groups. They rarely ever talk about parents and students being partners in our education system, and I think that is a crying shame. That should be our primary focus.

I listened to the minister talk, and in her initial comments she said that when she became the Minister of Education, her first priority in her job was to repair the relationships that had been battered by that government. That was her first priority: repairing the relationships with the teacher federations and the school boards.

I would suggest that the Minister of Education in the province of Ontario should have a different first priority. The first priority of the Minister of Education should be the success of our students. It should be about seeing our students succeed. That should be the first focus of a Minister of Education in the province of Ontario. Yet all we heard in that 20 minutes—less than 20 minutes—that the minister chose to take on debate of Bill 122 was simply about repairing relationships and not about student success.

I have been the education critic here in this Legislature for the Ontario PC caucus since the beginning of October. We have seen three pieces of legislation in education debated in this Legislature. Not one of them talks about improving the success of our students, and I think that's a crying shame.

We're moms and dads in this Legislature. We're grandmas and grandpas, aunts and uncles. We have or we know children who are in the education system. I know from our side, in the PC caucus, we have very young children with very young families, and we're very proud of that. For many families, particularly families of people around my age and the age of my peers, education is an important issue. They want to know that when they elect legislators to this place, they'll be able to talk about the future success of our education system. In reality, we have three pieces of legislation with respect to education, and not one of them—not one of them—talks about the strength and success of our students. Student achievement should be number one.

We should be talking about how to fix our declining math achievement in our schools. When PISA and TIMSS international comparisons show Ontario students on the decline, it gives rise for the education critic to say that we need to do something about that. Yet we're not talking about that in this Legislature. We see that our students, once they graduate from our high schools, go on to college and university—we see their achievement and they're struggling in mathematics, but we're not doing anything in this Legislature to talk about how we can improve the achievement of our students in mathematics and even in other subject areas.

I submit that we should be talking about education, and I'm very happy and excited to be doing that at every given stage. In fact, I was so excited to talk about this bill that I think I've spoken about this bill more than any other person in this Legislature, because it's important to get the process right. It's important to give rise to concerns that parents and kids have about their school system and bring those concerns to this Legislature. I find it completely amazing that we are talking about a bill that sets up a collective bargaining process, that talks about how we are going to engage in negotiation and education, yet when we come forward with a couple of ideas that we wanted to see in this piece of legislation, Bill 122, the phone never rang. No one wanted to negotiate. No one wanted to hear our concerns. We kept raising them over and over again.

I want to remind members of this Legislature that we started this journey way back in October. October 22, 2013, is when first reading of this legislation was in this place. We stated then, and we continue to state now, that we were interested in seeing how we can have an education system that is responsive to the desires of parents and their kids. We initiated a discussion on regulation 274, which is a regulation that governs how teachers are hired in the province of Ontario. We wanted to talk about it. It was an item of discussion that we were very interested in having. We've heard from principals and from parents that the system needed to change, that it needed to improve. If we could use this opportunity in Bill 122 to address those concerns, we were going to take it. I had written to the minister. I had asked questions in question period to the minister. Our response simply fell on deaf ears—well, our request fell on deaf ears; there wasn't really a response to be discussed.

We then went through a process of public hearings after the government thought this massive piece of legislation was so important that they actually invoked closure at second reading to get this bill into committee. We then listened in public hearings where the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association wanted to talk about how we can ensure that extracurricular activities would be part of our school system and a part of the educational experience of our students. I wasn't expecting the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association to bring that issue to the table, but they did. A "partner in education" made a presentation that articulated a position on how we can guarantee extracurricular activities in our schools.

In listening to that idea come up in public hearings, we thought it was our responsibility to take that cause up, because we on this side of the Legislature—and I'm

pretty sure that when this was going on in ridings right across the province one year ago, we heard from parents then, and we're continuing to hear from parents now, that this was such a vital and important issue that we should not let it go. Moms and dads started emailing, telling us their child was in a position where they were going to be competing in their sports or in their arts programs come the fall. Knowing full well a new collective bargaining season was upon us, they wanted to make sure that we were able to protect those extracurricular activities so their children could have an opportunity to be assessed by potential scouts, whether that's in sports like football, basketball or volleyball. The prospect of losing that final season was so detrimental to so many families. I would suggest that we are almost at a position where we can forecast into the future that there will be some challenges in the next round of negotiation. All that these moms, dads and students wanted was an assurance that we would do our utmost to make sure that extracurricular activities would be in our schools.

We demanded that; we talked about it. We reminded people that we were interested in moving this bill forward. I can say on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus that I think it's a good thing to have a process that is outlined. that is written out, that is discussed, that is debated amongst partners in the negotiation process. There is some merit to doing this. I'm not going to disagree. But when it comes time to standing up for parents and their kids, we need to have a serious conversation about doing that. The problem is that even though we made that case and we pled and pled about using this opportunity to provide some assurance to parents, to provide some assurance to their kids that their extracurricular activities were going to remain in our schools, the government not only failed to listen but they ultimately decided to shut us down, to close debate, to allocate us out of our time so we could no longer make that point.

#### 1420

I say that with a lot of concern, because there wasn't a lot of debate. Closure happened at second reading—three hours of public hearings, five minutes per presentation at committee, with three minutes per party in questions and answers at committee. One full day—only three hours in total—was devoted to public hearings on this vital piece of legislation. We've not seen too many bills this long, actually, in this Legislature. This is a substantive piece of legislation, yet nobody had the willingness, other than the Ontario PC caucus, to actually talk about this bill and to talk about what we can do for parents. I find that most troubling: that, despite the fact that so many people are concerned about our education system, when it comes time to talk about it in this Legislature, the government's response is to shut down, to end debate and to make sure that we don't hear the voices that need to be heard. I completely reject that. I would say with a degree of confidence that when we talk about education, parents and students will always have friends in the Ontario PC caucus.

I want to say this too: that when it comes to our teachers—we in the Ontario PC caucus believe we have

great teachers in the province of Ontario. We think that part of the strength of our great education system is the fact that the people teaching our children are of high quality. We want to assure teachers that we believe that we have a good resource that we like to promote. But that doesn't mean that, on every issue that we debate in this Legislature, we're going to agree. As I've stated with our friends that are teachers, all I'm interested in is the success of our students—to enrich their educational experience. Every teacher that I talk to, remarkably, believes the same thing. They want to see their kids succeed. They take their children, their students, much like they take their own kids in wanting to see them thrive in a nurturing environment—and, like the minister, my voice is going as well.

That doesn't mean that on every issue we are going to agree. I believe it is their job to teach our students. It's their federation's job to represent the interests of teachers. But it is our job as legislators to represent the interests of parents. It's our job to bring their voice to light. Usually, we're going to agree. But there are going to be occasions where we don't agree. I think that's fine. I actually think that's healthy. They're doing their job and we are doing ours. But to completely shut out those voices in a process so important as this, I find to be completely unacceptable. I think that when we look at the system before us, with the bill and legislation that we see, we could have done more to strengthen this bill than actually appears in this legislation. But when we received notice of this time allocation motion, some of the other amendments that we were seeking weren't able to make the floor.

You see, what this time allocation motion had done was to say that they weren't going to accept any other amendments if they weren't submitted from a week before. So if you hadn't put your amendments in, you weren't going to be able to debate them. Our approach on this was to say to the government that we had one particular ask, one particular request, and that we were going to withhold our other amendments just to make the process go a little quicker.

I think we should have a serious sunset clause provision in this legislation that says that after this round of negotiations is completed, we should relook, review, go back to the drawing board if necessary. I appreciate the minister commenting on that today, that indeed she would be open to having such a review process, but I think it would have been more secure if we had an automatic review provision that is stringent, that is robust, that we can go back to a year from now, once the next round of negotiations is finished. I think it would be important to have those discussions and to have that reassurance, not just from the government's perspective but also from the perspective of the other parties.

Again, we weren't able to have those discussions. We were looking at these provisions with extracurricular activities with a degree of sincerity. Again, we heard from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association that this was something that they wanted. We supported that idea because parents told us—but I want to say

something also on this particular point, because what we were suggesting wasn't completely a novel idea; it wasn't something that we came up with on our own. In fact, the Ontario Labour Relations Board said much the same thing that we are saying with respect to extracurricular activities and the withdrawal of those activities in and for our schools.

It becomes all too convenient, as the Ontario Labour Relations Board suggested, for people to say, "We're just going to withdraw voluntary activities," because you know those voluntary activities, those sports clubs, those debate clubs, those music programs, those drama clubs, those tutoring supports, those parent-teacher interviews and communication with parents? Those extra things are vital to the education experience for kids, and it's too convenient to yank those very important things off in a job action, because they do affect, they do motivate, they do have a serious impact on kids. But, you know, the people who are withdrawing those services still have a job to go to and still have a paycheque to collect. So the Ontario Labour Relations Board suggested that it's too difficult to distinguish between what is a mandatory and what is a voluntary task, and that any withdrawal of an activity should be considered a withdrawal that is a strike, which is something that we were saying, something we were suggesting. Again, it fell on deaf ears.

I have to say with a degree of sincerity that I become very concerned when that request that we were making simply is not acted upon, that draconian measures have to be implemented to restrict the kind of debate that we're having on this legislation because a provision that we were wishing to include that is based on Ontario Labour Relations Board rulings, that was based on the recommendations of a partner in our education system, is simply withdrawn. It's not acted upon—yet these very serious limitations to debate ensue.

I would say to our parents and our students that we won't forget, that we will continue to fight for a better education system, that we will continue to make the points we need to make in order to get to where we need to be. I want to say to parents and students that our number one focus is the success of our students. I want to see achievement go up, not down. I'm disappointed when our system has achievement that is going down further below what we had in 2003, when we left office. I can't understand how anybody would accept declining achievement as a success. Our failure to discuss these very important, vital matters in this Legislature is, I think, frankly, a shame.

## 1430

I want to say to parents and students that we support you.

I want to thank our teachers and our education partners for the good work that they're doing in nurturing our children.

I hope, in the future, once we have an education bill that's presented to this Legislature, that members aren't afraid to debate it and aren't afraid to talk about how we can improve the success of our students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

Applause.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My thanks to the Minister of the Environment for his unbridled enthusiasm when I rise to speak.

Speaker, I'm going to talk about this bill in two sections today. First, I want to talk a bit about the historical context, and secondly, I want to talk about the substance of the bill itself.

Before I start, I want to note that there are secondary school teachers here today from OSSTF district 12 and representatives of the francophone teachers, AEFO.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Bonjour. Mr. Peter Tabuns: Bonjour.

Speaker, in the summer of 2012, the Liberal government introduced Bill 115, the so-called Putting Students First Act. It should have been called the "creating conflict in our schools act." It was supported by the Conservatives. It set forth a time that caused a great deal of anguish for students, for parents, for families across Ontario, and, frankly, the women and men we depend on to look after our students day in and day out, to educate them, to make sure they're safe, to attend to their needs.

I take issue with the comments of the Conservative critic on this matter. I think that ensuring that we have good relations with those who actually do the work in our schools is important to the success of students. A demoralized workforce, a workforce that feels that it is being demonized, is a workforce that's going to find it very difficult to deliver what our children need to have delivered to them.

Speaker, I need to repeat what I said earlier about Bill 115, because it is such a massive factor in shaping the current state of mind of those involved in the education system—and the impact of that bill as it echoes through this society. Speaking about Bill 115, I have said previously:

"The bill goes well beyond any prior attempt by the provincial government to constrain collective bargaining. The authority given to the minister and cabinet effectively enables them to control both the process of bargaining and the results of bargaining, including the right to strike or lock out, and imposing collective agreements or their forms without any accountability to the Legislature. So all of you in here who are going to get a chance to vote know that you are delegating huge power to the cabinet. We are being asked to sign a very big blank cheque. So ask yourselves: Do you trust this cabinet with that blank cheque? I ask the Conservatives: Do you trust this government, this cabinet, with that blank cheque?" In fact, they did. "Aside from sitting ministers who would like to be seen well by their Premier, is there anyone else in this room who thinks that giving the Premier a blank cheque is a good idea? I don't.

"The act interferes with the collective bargaining process set out under the Labour Relations Act on signifi-

cant matters, such as wages and sick leave. It violates rights to freedom of association under section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

"The act seeks to shield the actions of cabinet from any review by the courts, the labour board or boards of arbitration, in contravention of a legal concept as basic as

the rule of law.

"It's interesting that the Labour Relations Board and any other arbitrators are prohibited from either inquiring into or making decisions about the constitutionality of the act or whether the act is in conflict with the Human Rights Code.

"I have to say, this is pretty thorough. It makes sure that all kinds of legal structures and protections are stripped away. It didn't leave anything to chance. If there's a violation of the Human Rights Code, that's set aside. If there are problems with the law governing relations between employers and employees, those protections are stripped away.

"There's an arbitrator who may look at this, do an assessment and conclude there are fundamental problems. That arbitrator can have no impact on the agree-

ment.

"The province can use the Labour Relations Board to enforce their agreement, but employees can't use that

same mechanism to protect themselves.

"Speaker, you know as well as I that if you're in a situation where the law can only be used to beat someone down, and no one can use the law to protect themselves, you've diminished the law, you've diminished the authority of law, and you've diminished the respect for the law, because it has become one-sided. That's what is happening here.

"I quote extensively because our experience with Bill 115" was so searing for people across this province. "For every member in this chamber, for families across Ontario, for teachers and education workers trying to make sense of a world that, to them, had been turned upside down, it was an experience that we do not want to

go through again."

I have to say that this bill before us today will not prevent a repetition of the experience with Bill 115. "If a government is willing to restrict the use of the Human Rights Code or the labour board for anyone to protect themselves but ensures those mechanisms can be used on the part of the government," when a government decides to ignore the Charter of Rights and throw fairness out the window, then a bill "that formalizes a bargaining framework is not going to stop a repeat of the offence in future."

Speaker, Bill 122 will provide some useful tools and structures for the people of this province, but it will not prevent a repetition of Bill 115. That has to be clear in

everyone's mind.

With regard to the substance of this bill itself, we all know that labour legislation is crucial to the stability of our education system. It needs to be based on fairness and have support from stakeholders in order to function effectively. When Bill 122 was first introduced, stakeholders were very concerned about its impact. I had the opportunity to talk to a broad range of people, starting in the summer of 2012. I heard from teachers across Ontario. I had the opportunity to talk to a number of parents. I had the opportunity to talk to people who work in our schools supporting those teachers.

Over the past several months, we in the NDP have worked closely with stakeholders and, together, we were able to press the government to amend this bill significantly. We made important changes to this bill. It is not perfect; that is clear. But it is a better piece of legislation now, and we will be supporting it in third reading.

We drafted 48 amendments. We were able to press the government to accept 21 amendments in total to their own bill, including amendments moved by our caucus. That, in our opinion, is a substantial win for the people of this province and the stakeholders in the education system. I think it's another example of how the NDP has been able to get results for people and hold the government accountable.

While the Tories sat on the sidelines and obstructed the committee's work, we proposed solutions that work for the children and families of Ontario and our partners in education. I need to take issue with some words from my honourable colleague from Cambridge, the education critic for the Progressive Conservative Party. He said that no one would talk about this bill. In fact, I gave a one-hour leadoff. My colleagues had their opportunity to speak about the bill. We indeed did debate this bill.

The Progressive Conservatives talk about the fact that they weren't able to introduce amendments because of time allocation. Speaker, I note that when it came time to file amendments, we had filed amendments; the government had filed amendments. The opposition had filed two. If there were extensive changes, it was incumbent upon them to actually step up to the plate, file them and move things forward. That was not going on, Speaker. That was not going on.

Speaker, this act—an overview—changes the collective bargaining framework by formalizing central and local collective bargaining. It mandates a system of central bargaining on fiscal matters and key matters of provincial education policy. The central table is a tripartite structure, but the crown has a slightly different status than the other two parties. Local tables maintain the traditional two-part structure.

This bill will have an important impact on all of the stakeholders in the education system. Students and their families, school boards, teachers, support staff—all are going to be affected by the structure that's being put in place.

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When we talked to stakeholders initially, they were concerned about the government's status as a non-party to the negotiations. They were concerned that the arbitration criteria were very explicit on considering the ability of the employer to pay, but there was no mention of fair remuneration or decent working conditions. Stakeholders

were concerned that the scope of ministerial ability to reserve items for the central table was extremely large. The term of collective agreements gave the government the ability to define the length of the term rather than negotiate it; that was a concern. The timelines for serving notice to bargain, at 270 days, was seen as being too long. Stakeholders pressed on that, we pressed on that; the government moved on that. The process and implications for central grievance arbitration were unclear in the act as originally introduced. The threshold to represent support workers at a central table was concerning to some stakeholders, as was their ability to in fact demand to be able to be part of the central process. Others told us that the ratification process was unclear.

We drafted approximately 50 amendments, 48 or 50 amendments, based on the feedback we heard from those stakeholders. We used those amendments to increase pressure on the government to change this bill to a form that would make sense for everyone who was going to be part of the bargaining process and to ensure that this bill, to the extent it was possible to do so, would work for everyone

I have made many criticisms; I do need to give some thanks. I want to thank teachers and education workers who came to us, spoke with us, debated with us; and when we had questions, were extraordinarily rapid in responding.

I want to thank Ministry of Education staff who very directly answered questions that we had, questions that allowed us to move forward. I have to say that the minister's political staff and the minister herself were business-like in their dealings with us. We may disagree, but they were able to work in a way that was needed to get through legislation that people in this province need to have gotten through.

I have to say, there were some things that were very important for us to move forward. It was important to clarify that the crown has to abide by its duties. I'm very pleased that the minister, earlier, made it quite clear that the spirit and intent of this legislation is that this government has to participate and bargain in good faith in the central bargaining; that was a very important consideration for us. I'm very pleased to hear her say that, and I'm very pleased to have seen the changes in the bill that bring that into effect.

We were concerned that school boards and their spinoffs, or their collaborations with other school boards, can be considered under the Labour Relations Act as one employer entity. That was a substantial consideration for us. That amendment was made.

We were concerned that the role of the crown be clarified so that its participation in negotiations is not an entitlement of the crown, but rather required of the crown. That was a substantial and useful amendment.

School boards received assurance that they'll have full co-operation in good faith from the crown during the period in preparation for and while conducting bargaining. School boards face a very difficult political terrain. Ensuring that they are dealt with with respect by the

provincial government was important to have included in this legislation.

It was important to secure the rights of non-teacher bargaining units to be designated as the employee bargaining agencies during specific rounds of collective bargaining. In fact, based on requests from education workers, we were able to craft a structure within which support from at least 15 bargaining units representing at least two thirds of the total bargaining units and two thirds of the employees represented by the union would be required to ensure that there was a place at the bargaining table for non-teacher federations or unions.

The legislation was also clarified to ensure that a council of trade unions could be designated as the employee bargaining agency for a central table for the smaller bargaining units.

These were substantial changes, advances in the bill, which allow it to function in a way that I believe will better serve the interests of the people of this province.

We were able to press for and ensure that ratification procedures and strike vote procedures are determined by the labour organizations in accordance with the Labour Relations Act, and not imposed upon employees.

The government is required to conduct greater consultation with affected stakeholders prior to setting the operative term of the collective agreement.

The role of the Labour Relations Board is clarified regarding matters for central bargaining and local bargaining, and to ensure that denominational rights and privileges are not infringed upon.

We were pleased that we were able to make those advances. Again, the stakeholders deserve credit for the work that they did, making sure there was clarity in the message they brought to the government and to us, and their ability to mobilize themselves to make sure their message got through. We were pleased to work with them.

There was one area where we did not get the support of the government, and that was with regard to section 37 of the bill, which states that an arbitrator shall resolve disputes by taking into consideration:

—school boards' ability to pay;

—the extent to which services may have to be reduced, in light of the resolution, if taxation levels are not increased;

—"the economic situation in Ontario;"

—a comparison of "comparable employees in the public and private sectors;" and

—"the school boards' ability to attract and retain qualified employees."

Frankly, we believe that those criteria should have been struck out or at least amended to also require the arbitrator to take into consideration "the need to establish compensation and other terms and conditions of employment that are fair and reasonable in relation to the qualifications required, the responsibility assumed and the nature of the work performed." We believe that our proposal was very reasonable and fair, and simply asked that the work performed by teachers and education

workers be taken into consideration when an arbitrator makes a decision. It is unfortunate, in my mind, that the PCs and the Liberals joined together to defeat that amendment put forward by us. That is regrettable.

Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to address this matter this afternoon. I look forward to a vote on this bill. I look forward to addressing the issues around education that we, in Ontario, have to come to grips with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 1, 2014, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Sandals has moved third reading of Bill 122. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it.

in my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes. Thank you very much.

Third reading vote deferred.

# EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2014, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to advise the House that when we last debated this motion, the member for London–Fanshawe had the floor. I am pleased to recognize the member for London–Fanshawe. 1450

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you so much. It certainly is a privilege to speak on Bill 21, the home caregiver leave act. I have spoken to it earlier, and I think I have the rest of my speech to do. When I was speaking before, it was with regard to the fact that this is at third reading. The government was—I'm a little out of breath. I ran up the stairs.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Have a glass of water. Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. Water, please. We were discussing the fact that the government was pushing the opposition members here to pass this bill quickly. Everybody was in agreement. I might see some familiar faces here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation—

Interjection: Cancer.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oh. Cancer. They are very interested in making sure that this bill does see the end of the day in a positive light and that we all get a chance to vote on it.

Absolutely, we were in favour of the bill, but at the time, I was in the middle of starting to talk about the

amendments that happened at committee.

One of the amendments that I felt was very important was the time originally put in this bill: Workers or employees whose family members were ill had to take time in weeks at a time, in blocks. I remember talking about this before. My concern was that not every circumstance would require a staff person or an employee to take that week at a time or two weeks at a time. They may just need a day for their family member to go to a doctor's appointment or if they need some help for that day; it's not a long-term situation that needed a week taking time off work.

The other flipside of that: Number one, the person who you may be looking after wouldn't need that whole time of a week, but the staff member maybe couldn't afford to take that week off, because we know that that time that you're allotted to use now under this bill is unpaid. That was one of the concerns, because if you are required to do that, you're going to end up in a situation where you can be economically disadvantaged. You've got your mortgage to pay. You still have to put food on the table. You have to pay your hydro bill. We know that hydro bills are skyrocketing and that people can't even afford to pay those bills today, let alone when they apply for increases. I was glad to see, when the committee met, that that was one of the amendments that they passed.

I know that the Liberal government, during that committee process, didn't want to agree to that. That's one of the things that I felt was extremely important during third reading: how to describe those turns of events to the people who are here and how those things came to be, because we always profess how important it is, during second reading, that we talk about ways to improve the bill and the important work that the committee does. Once that work came back here, we were being asked to push that bill through really quickly because everybody was in support of it, and I think this is an opportunity that we can take now to talk about what happened in committee and what benefits came out of that hard work that we're always professing is done in committee. That was my point, and I'm glad I'm able to talk about this now for the next five and a half minutes.

That was a tremendous amendment, and I think that the organizations would probably agree. They nodded in agreement. Excellent. I don't know if they were aware of that amendment.

That was the other part of my justification as to why we need a full debate on this whole bill: People out in the

audience, sitting in their living rooms, may not understand that this is an option that was changed. They may have listened to the second reading debate and thought that was the way the bill was going to read. Then that knowledge doesn't transfer into their workplace, where they may have used this bill and said, "Gee, I heard that we had to take it in blocks of a week at a time, but now I've heard the amendment, where Teresa Armstrong from London-Fanshawe was speaking to her constituents out on the couch." I know some of my constituents are listening, like Mrs. Jones out there. I know she's listening to me. And Joyce, I know, is listening as well. They tune in every day. Now they can say, "Hey, I can actually use this amendment. Now I know it's not a week; I can take a day or an afternoon to help my family member, my mother or sister, whoever needs that help." That was great.

The other amendment that they talked about—and it was very important, I think, to the rural community-was the definition of who can actually write that note and describe that serious medical condition. Originally, it was really restricted to a doctor, and that definition was expanded to include a registered nurse because oftentimes, especially in the rural areas and even in my riding, people have a very difficult time finding a doctor. We get a lot of calls where people are trying to get a doctor. They've gone to a few places. They're not accepting them. If you didn't have a doctor but you did see a nurse, they're in a position now where they can write that note for that serious medical condition—where it can give you that opportunity to look after your family member. So that was an important feature, I think, that was discussed in committee, has come to the House and is going to help the people who perhaps need to use this bill.

The last thing I want to talk about, though, in the last few minutes that I have is the fact that this bill is a feelgood bill. The population is getting older, and a lot of us are that sandwich generation, where we're going to have to look after our parents or grandparents. The thing is, people who are maybe put in that situation, who have to look after loved ones, cannot—the precarious employment that we have today: I think that's what I want to touch on. Not everybody has a full-time job. There are a lot of people in my riding who are working two and three part-time jobs and really struggling to make ends meet. Even though this bill has good intentions and I agree with the bill and I think it is going to help people, I really feel for those who have to choose between taking that time off work without pay and having to look after the family member who really needs that medical attention. That's one thing that was something I felt kind of lacked in the bill. Even though it's there for the benefit of people to use, economically, financially, it doesn't help them.

The other piece was the enforcement piece. We felt that it needed to be tightened. Unfortunately, that was overlooked. It's overlooked, and there's not going to be that enforcement piece. I know most people are reasonable employers and staffers who can work things out, but we wanted to protect those workers who maybe

required that enforcement if they got a "no" from their employer and felt that if they took that leave, perhaps their position might be compromised because they exercised this bill and they had no choice because their parent or their child was having a serious operation and they needed to be home with them for that short time.

Those were the few things that, yes, we think—I mean, we're going to vote for this bill and we're going to pass this bill. But it was extremely important and it's also very important for anyone here today who wants to get up—members from their riding—and speak on behalf of this bill on third reading and express their concerns to this government that some of the amendments were certainly made, but we could have gone a little further here and actually made it a much stronger bill in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It is a pleasure to rise today and to follow up on the comments from the member from London–Fanshawe.

I just wanted to take the chance to introduce some of the people who have joined us here today in support of this bill. They've been here throughout third reading debate. Many of the people who are here are actually caregivers themselves. In the east and the west members' gallery, we have, from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Sumi Shanmuganathan, Cristin Napier, Nadia Formigoni; from the Canadian Cancer Society, Joanne Di Nardo, Florentina Stancu-Soare; and with the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, Kathryn Fudurich, Helena Adler, Delia Sinclair Frigault, Gene Long, Sue Vanderbent and Catherine Suridjan.

These people have come forward to today to say that they would like this bill to go forward. I believe we're starting to reach that opinion. I hope that in the House this afternoon, we'll allow this excellent bill to go forward.

Simply put, it's about compassion. This bill, if passed, is going to recognize the importance of family and job security. It creates unpaid, job-protected leave for hardworking Ontarians in this province. It's going to help all of us. It's going to help every Ontarian in this province provide care and support to their loved ones in times of greatest need.

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It's a bill that I think is clearly supportable by all members of the House. I understand that some conversations have been taking place that would allow us to allow this bill to move forward through the House today. I think it's excellent that the people who have supported this bill have come forward today in order to witness this because I think they understand more than anybody the impact that this bill will have on the everyday lives of ordinary Ontarians at the time they need it most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's a pleasure to speak to my colleague from London–Fanshawe. She ran in here and gave a wonderful speech.

Mr. Steve Clark: She sprinted.

Mr. Bill Walker: She sprinted in here, yes.

Similar to her and some folks who have spoken to me in my riding—Lera Ryan, a volunteer at the Canadian Cancer Society; members of the Heart and Stroke Foundation have spoken to me; and a number of other volunteer agencies that, again, are in the business of providing care to those most in need—I think this is a good bill. We spoke about it a year ago.

My sadness is, particularly for our guests in the audience-and I won't rename them all; the Minister of Labour did that, so we'll just say "ditto" to what's in Hansard, for all of our friends. It's great to see them continuing to come and put a face—to keep the pressure on this House to do the right thing. Sadly, it could have been done, I think, quicker than it has been. It's a year since the last time I've spoken about it. Think of all the people who could have actually been benefiting from this, had we been able to get the legislation through. That seems to be indicative, unfortunately, of the Liberal government. They bring through what they want, when they want. Unfortunately, as we've seen recently, it's a lot about political gain. It's typically about them either saving seats or trying to win seats. This one doesn't need to be that. All-party support has been here. We need to move it forward.

I'm glad to see some amendments made that we pushed for in our PC caucus. One of the biggest concerns I had was that you had to use a week at a time. An injury, an illness, just doesn't work that way. Many times, it might be just a half a day you need to take care of a loved one, to get them to an appointment, to do something. I'm glad to see that those amendments were made and they're going to be here.

Very similar to some of the other speakers—we need to show that compassion; we need to show that care. We have an aging demographic. The baby boomers are moving through. There's going to be the sandwich generation—I'm kind of in that middle sandwich. We need to be there for our aging parents, and we need to be there for the younger members of our society. I think this type of bill is a good thing, to be able to give that opportunity.

We need to ensure that it's also fair to the employers. When someone leaves who is a valuable employee, we also need them to not lose their job. There's enough people—a million, I believe—unemployed today as a result of this Liberal government.

It's a good piece of legislation. I look forward to speaking about it more when it's my turn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the comments of my colleague the member from London–Fanshawe, who I think expressed her support for the final product that we see in this bill, the caregiver leave act.

We're certainly happy to hear that the government has realized that family members require a bit more flexibility in the support that they're able to deliver to loved ones, should that need arise. That was expressed through our caucus, through the committee work and all throughout the debate that we did have the ability to have on this bill—of course, recognizing that it is a little bit prohibitive to have to seek validation from a doctor to be able to receive that clearance to take a leave from your employment. It makes it more flexible to have it through an RN, to be able to validate the need for that leave.

Of course, Speaker, we had hoped that the government would understand that this could be even more of an enhanced type of support mechanism, with supportive dollars attached to family members who had to leave work to supplement their income. Right now, things are tight. People are living day to day, paycheque to paycheque, and to take eight weeks off, whether it be in days or in a block, certainly would create a lot of financial stress on people, all things considered. We hope that the government follows through with what they had intended on, in talking to the federal government to see if they could dovetail into the employment insurance provisions, to seek some sort of support through that mechanism. I don't know if that is happening. I hope those discussions are happening. It's certainly something that we could see as an added component to make this bill as effective as it possibly can, to deliver that care that we know families desperately need when they're ill.

Speaker, I'm certainly supportive of the bill, and I'll look forward to more debate on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 21, Leaves to Help Families.

I listened attentively, Mr. Speaker, to the comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the lead speaker, the member from London–Fanshawe, and earlier the member from Essex, all supporting Bill 21.

Let me just remind the members opposite, we have now debated Bill 21 for 13 hours during second reading and more than six hours in third reading—over 19 hours in total. Over 67 members of this House have spoken about this bill, yet I just heard that the member from Essex wants more amendments to the bill to improve it in terms of finance. That kind of amendment needs to be done through committee.

My question here is, Mr. Speaker, as we do the third reading debate: Is it the intention of both opposition parties to have this bill passed?

Interjection.

Ms. Soo Wong: Then let's cut to the chase, because at the end of the day Ontarians are looking to this House for leadership. Let's call the question, but more importantly, folks—because we need to remember that our duty is to Ontarians and every family member who is seeking this bill, to support their care. More importantly, when I hear opposition members like the member from Bruce—Grey say they support the bill, why don't you encourage your members to do the same? At the end of the day, Ontarians are looking to this House for leadership, and I believe strongly that stalling this bill's passage through

debate will not help this bill through. I am encouraging everyone to get this legislation through, because Ontarians are looking to us to provide this passage.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member from Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: A point of order, through you: I just listened to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, and she talked about how much debate we've had. I checked with the table prior to Bill 21 being called, and I understand for third reading we've only had five hours and 45 minutes of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's fine. I don't find a point of order, but it's interesting information.

We now go back to the member for London-Fanshawe, who has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm going to go over something I went over before, which is that I hear what the Liberal members are saying; I hear that. But rushing through things is not a way to make decisions.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Rushing?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Rushing. Third reading is a democratic process we have in this House. If a member wants to speak to the bill, they have every right to get up and speak to the bill. You know what? Honestly, I remember when I was talking to the bill earlier. I forget who the member was. He acted—I don't know if he was actually angry, but he acted very much like he was upset with the opposition for not pushing this bill through and getting it on the House paper to vote on it and calling the vote.

With all due respect, we are here to speak to bills that are presented in this House, to give feedback, and I believe that wholeheartedly. Yes, there are bills I would like to see rushed through too, that the New Democrats have put forward, but I'm not going to stand here and say, "We don't need debate on this. We don't want to hear your views, over on this side." It has to be discussed fully—that's my personality—and it has to be dissected. You want to get things right. When you have legislation, it can't be half-baked. I've heard that a lot. This actually applies in any kind of legislation: It can't be half-baked. A full debate; it goes to committee; all the work is done. When it comes back here, you can be proud of the bill that we're going to pass when it comes to a vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 21, the leaves to families act. I know we're in third reading and I heard there are concerns from people that it's not going through fast enough. However, this is an important bill. I think it's fair to say that all members of this House support this bill. It's not that often we have a bill where we can support it even as amended.

I wanted to put a few things on the record today and bring in a couple of other things that tie into it somewhat, because a lot of the things we do with legislation may have a direct impact on other pieces of legislation. I want to tie a little bit into community care access centres and some of the great work that our hospice organizations do as well.

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Under the explanatory note: "The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

"Section 49.3, which creates family caregiver leave, is added to the act. Under section 49.3, an employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to a family member who has a serious medical condition. An employee may take up to eight weeks per calendar year with respect to each family member described in the section or prescribed by regulation. Entitlement to family caregiver leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1, critically ill child care leave under section 49.4, crimerelated child death or disappearance leave under section 49.5 and personal emergency leave under section 50.

"Section 49.4, which creates critically ill child care leave, is added to the act. Under section 49.4, an employee who has been employed by his or her employer for at least six consecutive months is entitled to a leave of absence without pay of up to 37 weeks to provide care or support to a critically ill child. Entitlement to critically ill child care leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1, family caregiver leave under section 49.3, crime-related child death or disappearance leave under section 49.5 and personal emergency leave under section 50.

"Section 49.5, which creates crime-related child death or disappearance leave, is added to the act. Under section 49.5, an employee who has been employed by his or her employer for at least six consecutive months is entitled to a leave of absence without pay if a child of the employee dies or disappears and it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child died or disappeared as a result of a crime. An employee is not entitled to a leave of absence under section 49.5 if the employee is charged with the crime or if it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child was a party to the crime. An employee may take a leave of up to 104 weeks with respect to the death of a child and up to 52 weeks with respect to the disappearance of a child. Entitlement to crime-related child death or disappearance leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1, family caregiver leave under section 49.3, critically ill child care leave under section 49.4 and personal emergency leave under section 50.

"Section 52.1, which sets out rules relating to leaves required to be taken in periods of entire weeks, is added to the act."

Of course it comes into effect when it receives royal assent.

I've had a few people in my riding come forward, and they have asked us to support this bill mainly because of some sad situations. You think of the disappearance of a child. I can think of a friend of mine up in Midland, Debbie Just, who lost her son, Jake Just. It's now years ago that he disappeared from a Halloween party. Every day, Debbie lives this story over and over again. I've known her for a number of years—I actually can't recall the exact day. But he just disappeared, and no one has been able to trace him to this day. He was, I think, 18 years of age at the time. I think he'd be somewhere in his early 30s today.

Knowing families like that, and knowing that she was going through employment at the time, the pain she suffered had to be absolutely incredible. That's the one person I want to put on the record. I didn't ask her permission to put it on the record, but I wanted to say that because I've known Debbie a few years, and I can tell you that it's a pain that doesn't go away. I believe it's up for two years—that pain is still there even many, many years later, and you think of these kinds of examples.

We hear, each and every day, stories from people. Some people come into this Legislature and give examples: A certain medication may be required to prolong their life, whether it's cancer or I think it was for cystic fibrosis that the young lady was here just the other day. Those are sad, sad stories of those families. The trauma they go through is so intense that it's hard to believe that some families go through that. It just makes you appreciate what we have when our children are healthy, and they're looking at things in a positive way, and we don't have to worry about something as serious as a medical death or some kind of an accident, whatever it may be. From that perspective alone, there have been a few examples that have come forward to my office where they asked us to support this bill. I think our caucus is. I'm not sure the amendments are exactly right—I wasn't part of the committee that did the work on the amendments. However, usually we get the amendments fairly accurate, so I think it's safe to say that we would be pretty supportive of the amendments as well.

My problem with the bill is—and it would be interesting to hear, and it may well already be in Hansard and they may have been discussed already. When I look at all the things that I read in the explanatory note, I'm wondering how many of those things that are regulated are difficult to actually implement. I'm thinking of a child's death or a disappearance, or the child of a loved one. Is there going to be any kind of a problem—I guess the problem is, so many of these regulations we develop here seem so easy when we say it in a bill, but when you try to implement it after, quite often, we're into some very, very difficult decisions. That is a problem. Then you hear these stories where someone never did get their right to leave work because of some tiny part of the regulation that didn't really meet—

Mr. Michael Harris: A technicality.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, a technicality—maybe a bureaucratic decision that has caused somebody some grief over this. If we're creating a bill that's supposed to be so sentimental and emotional as this legislation is required to be, I'm hoping that no matter what happens, this is something that can actually be implemented

without any kinds of barriers whatsoever. I think it's really difficult for these families when they have already had the loss, then they come back later and have a more difficult decision.

I know we've got some support for the bill. I've got a letter here that I wanted to put on the record from Spinal

Cord Injury Ontario. It says:

"I am writing on behalf of Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (formerly the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario). We are a lead organization with the Ontario Spinal Cord Injury Solutions Alliance, a network of key SCI stakeholders from 70+ organizations including people with SCI, researchers, service providers, physicians, and funders from across Ontario that spans the continuum of care from injury onset through to community reintegration. We ask that the Progressive Conservative caucus work with the governing party and the third party to pass Bill 21, the Employment Standards Act (Leaves to Help Families). We support its implementation into law at the earliest possible opportunity. Along with the Multiple Sclerosis Society, we do not believe it is beneficial to prolong the process with further debate as amendments put forward by your party that we made in committee.

"As you are aware, major illnesses place pressures on families, both emotional and financial. People who are ill should be able to rely on family caregivers without fear that their caregiver will lose his or her job. Bill 21 permits eligible persons to take unpaid leave to address catastrophic life episodes and to re-enter the workforce with ease once the leave has ended.

"This is legislation that all parties can—and should—support."

One of the things, as I read letters like that, is that on the one hand, I feel this is really something for the employees, but if you're a small business employer and you have that type of a situation happen to yourself, that's also traumatic. I understand that there's no way that there's any kind of compensation or anything; it's their business. They have to live with whatever the problems may be. That worries me a little bit. I worry that the employer is under these rules, under the Employment Standards Act, to give someone the right to take time off work—it should be that way—but when they have the same situation happen to them, there's no one who comes to help them in any way. In fact, that's probably the time when you'd find the bureaucracy move in more than ever, through the College of Trades or workmen's compensation or something like that. They come in and they hassle these people out of existence. That's the type of thing that I worry about as well. We've got a number of people in small business who have the same kinds of situations happen to them as well. I think we all know some of those families. I know of cases in my riding, people with car dealerships and that sort of thing, and they've lost a child to cancer or whatever it may be, and in the end they come forward as community leaders in fundraising for that child's disease, whether it's some form of cancer or cystic fibrosis or whatever those may be. I can tell you that there's no one there to help them

except the whole community that tries to support that business because they are true leaders in that business.

The other thing that I wanted to put on the record and talk a little bit about today is the work done in these situations where people pass on, where they know they are going to die and they have to go to something like a hospice. I can tell you that I am so pleased to work with the two organizations in my riding, Hospice Huronia and Hospice Simcoe. Hospice Simcoe has a new facility just on the outskirts of my riding and Rod Jackson's riding, right in Barrie, and it serves Muskoka and Simcoe county right now. I have to tell you that at that particular facility, when it was first built, people thought, "Jeez, it seems like a big building"—a lot of money, a lot of expense and that sort of thing. However, it has been a godsend to many, many families. A few people have come up to me after they lost a husband or a father or, in one case, a mother. They came and said, "You know what? We have to keep funding these. We have to keep supporting these." They really were such a wonderful way for that person to end their life, with their family surrounding them and in good care. As they passed on, it was interesting to hear the comments come back after. This is a very, very emotional time of people's lives, when they see someone pass on like that. So I should say a special thank you to Hospice Simcoe and Hospice Huronia, but to all the people who operate hospice organizations in our province and our country, a very special thank you, because it is so nice that people can leave this world in dignity and respect, with their families surrounding them. It means an awful lot to those families and I just wanted to pass that on, because it's very, very important.

The other thing, on more of a negative side, that I'd like to speak on for a couple of minutes is the problems that we have with people as they are—we talked about the sandwich generation. There are a number of people where we're trying to get seniors to live in their homes. It's been a mandate or sort of a goal, aging at home and all these types of things, but one of the things that is really failing us right now, and I've mentioned this on a number of occasions, is the fact that the community care access centres really are not budgeted or funded to where they should be. I can tell you that right now they're starting a new year, as of April 1, but boy, we've had some real problems in my riding, in my constituency offices, trying to work with the families and trying to find any help whatsoever. In one case, you're saying that we've got community care access to come in and help someone after they have recovered from the hospital. Many of those people who are recovering from the hospital are terminal. The fact of the matter is that we're going to give people time off on one hand, but when we do need the health care and home care, quite often it's not there. It's certainly not there in enough hours.

I think it's interesting that we work with that as well, because health care, I think, is on the tip of what could be almost disastrous if we don't handle this thing carefully. We've got this baby boomer generation who are retiring

quickly now, and what could happen with long-term-care beds and community care access funding could be considered to be almost disastrous if it's not handled properly in the next decade—not just the next decade, but the next 20 years. We just can't turn our back on that and say that the funding programs that are in place now are sufficient, because as people age and get sicker, we are going to have to have that help for them.

I know that every government faces it. I think that probably every government across our nation faces it, and I think the federal government acknowledges that. But at the same time, this grey tsunami, as we call it, is heading towards those years when they're 75 to 85 to 95. We all know as MPPs that we get invited all the time to milestone birthdays like 90, and you probably know yourself how many people now reach 100 years of age. It's amazing. You can hardly believe it at times. Mr. Speaker, even in my 15 years as an MPP, I attend far more people turning 100 years of age today than I did 15 years ago.

We're seeing people living longer. They're living healthier, but as they get to the last years of their life, and sometimes it's the last months of their lives, that's when they need the most health care of any time in their life, and they are at their very sickest. It sort of ties into people having time off to work with their families, but it also ties into the fact that that's why we have these programs like home care and our community care access centres: so we can actually make sure that people have nursing assistance as well.

It's nice that the caregiver assistance is there, and thank God for any family that does have a son or a daughter or a grandson or a granddaughter who can help the family through that difficult time. But at the same time, we still have to worry about whether the funding will be there. It's a Ministry of Labour bill, but the bill actually has Ministry of Health repercussions because, you know what? We're looking down the road at other things as well.

I think all governments have done it in the past. I think too many of us are working in silos. This is a Ministry of Labour bill, and I'm not sure what the regulations will be with that, but we also have Ministry of Health repercussions over here, with home care, aging at home, hospices etc.; it blends in very nicely. These all tie together into what makes our province.

As we said earlier, our party will be supporting the bill. We know there has been a lot of debate on it, but it's good debate. Anything I've heard seem to be positive steps, like the member for London–Fanshawe and her speech. I thought there were some good comments she made. We'll hear others this afternoon as we move forward as well.

However, at the same time, I know the government is wanting to get this bill passed like that because they want to get on to some bill that they probably want to rush through. That's why I think we have to be careful with it. I thank everyone for the opportunity to say a few words today.

I just want to close by saying that, through our health care white papers and the work we've done on behalf of the PC caucus, I know we have put a lot of thought into seniors' health. It has been a major part of our white paper commitments, and it's something that we want to go to the people with with really strong support to make sure that we can provide the services, that they are going to be there.

That's why we continue to talk about job creation and more jobs. We have to have people working so that we can create that wealth so that people will pay taxes to pay for these things like home care, hospices and giving businesses the opportunity to give people time off so they can have their leave when a loved one is sick, like under Bill 21.

These are sad stories, and I applaud the government for bringing the bill forward. But first of all, we have to say that we can't over-regulate it, making sure that it is streamlined so that it will work for everyone; and second of all so that when we get down to the fine details of it, it does blend in nicely with community care access centres, hospices and our health care system, because I think it's all one-on-one.

There's a little more on disappearing children, which would be a crime ministry, of course. But overall, this is very important for families in Ontario, and I thank you today, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to say a few words. I look forward to any comments on my debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wasn't going to rise and speak to this; I'm interested in moving it along as fast as I can. But in response to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt's suggestion that we shouldn't be talking about it anymore, some of us on this side of the house see that as an attack on democracy. As you know, Speaker, we're all here to make democracy work. So I thought I would say to the member: There's a great quotation out there from one of the greatest Canadians, Tommy Douglas, who, as you know, was a great champion of democracy at the provincial level and at the federal level. Tommy Douglas said, "The greatest way to defend" democracy "is to make it work.

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"Unless democracy can give people full stomachs, clothing to wear, decent houses to live in, educational opportunities, security in their old age, health services for themselves and their families when they need it—unless democracy can do that, democracy will have failed.

"It's your job and mine to make democracy work."

So I say to the member: We're here to make democracy work. Part of making democracy work is to stand and speak on behalf of your constituents, to speak on behalf of the people of Ontario to make a bill even better than what is proposed; and there should not be a time limit on that.

Speaker, in the interest of moving it along, I'll give up the rest of my time. But I wanted to make the point that democracy works when we all stand in our place and have an opportunity to speak to whatever is on the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** As a physician, parliamentarian and member of the government, of course, I wholly support and recommend to this House that we all support Bill 21, the family leave act.

I will certainly take my honourable colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh at his word when he itemizes and reminisces about the value of democracy. I would just simply say that we have now had 68 members of this Legislature exercise their democratic right on what I think is a relatively benign bill that we might want to get out to the people of Ontario.

With due respect, of course, to the honoured memory of Tommy Douglas, at some point, members on this side of the House would welcome a hero from this century as opposed to the previous century. But, be that as it may, I'll let that sit with you.

Speaker, we are looking at a bill that empowers family members to essentially express their love, compassion and caregiving to members of their family who are undergoing catastrophic illness. As was rightly cited by some of my colleagues opposite, with the demographic shift, the greying of the country as we age and experience more and more illnesses—whether it's cancer or post-surgical, post hip or knee replacement and so on—those are the times when we need these types of leave, and this act should be passed right away.

As I say, with respect, certainly, to the democratic process, I think those of us on this side of the House at some point would like to see the light at the end of the tunnel, the end point and the exercise and the diffuse broadcast of our democratic right by getting this bill passed. Let's move it out to the people of Ontario: Bill 21, the family leave act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a privilege to follow my colleague from Simcoe North. I commend him. He speaks from the heart. He has passion. He cares about his constituents. Every time he comes to this Legislature, he talks about the things that are truly about people and what's going to impact their lives.

He has done a whale of a job—an exemplary job—against the College of Trades. He's out there working on behalf of the everyday working man and woman who just wants to make a life in this great province, and he's done a great job.

He has spoken a lot in his comments about the groups that are here—Spinal Cord Injury Ontario and Canadian Paraplegic Association—who have supported this and wanted it to happen. We have talked about the cancer society and the heart and stroke folks, who, again, are keeping our feet to the fire. I applaud them yet again for doing that.

He talked about a residential hospice, and I, too, have one in my riding, the Residential Hospice of Grey Bruce, that provides great care to that section of our society who need our help at the very end of their lives and who have paved the way for us, Mr. Speaker. So this bill will be very helpful.

He talked about health care and how critical a stage we are at in our evolution as a province of what is needed for this demographic, the baby boomers and all people, of

health care.

I would just like to say that I'm not certain that this government, in most people's eyes, is deemed to be doing a very good job. They've dropped the ball on a lot of files in health care. I'm not certain if you talked to the general populace that they feel they have a better health care system. I hope this bill will move us towards that.

He talked about the disappearance of a child in his riding. I send out my heartfelt sympathy to Debbie, the mom, and the whole extended family for that. I can't even fathom what they would go through during this type of thing. A bill like this could give them just that little bit of relief, respite, to be able to step back from their lives and deal with that grief and stress at their time of most need.

I will be speaking to that, Speaker—I am the next speaker up, and I will be giving a little bit of my thoughts on this topic. But I'm really hopeful that the three parties have worked on this to make some amendments, and I look forward to supporting it when it actually comes to the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again—and it truly is—it's always an honour to be able to speak in this House and to follow the member from Simcoe North. I would like to say something about the remarks from the member from Simcoe North. They were thoughtful. He talked about people in his own riding, people who have suffered a great deal and people who a bill like this could help. He had some reservations about the bill. There have been some changes. This is third reading of the bill, so the bill is much better than the last time it was debated here.

But there have also been comments from other members—one is the member from Etobicoke North—that this is a relatively benign bill, and we should rush it through and it's going to help a lot of people. I would like to remind the member from Etobicoke North that the government had a majority for eight years and had the opportunity to rush a lot of bills through the House. A lot of those bills turned out rather badly, and maybe that's why: because they didn't take the time to actually listen.

The member from Etobicoke North also mentioned that only 68 members—or he meant it differently—well, perhaps, on many issues, all 107 should speak, because all of us have different life experiences; all of us have something to add. It has taken many, many years to develop a parliamentary process that actually—and I do believe that all of us believe that the parliamentary process—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Should be respected.

Mr. John Vanthof: —should be respected, thank you, and that works. It bothers me to my core when I hear,

"Well, we no longer have time to talk." This is the only time we have to actually make sure things are done right. We've all seen bills when they have been rushed through, especially in majority Parliaments, and they haven't been done right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Simcoe North for his reply.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the members from Etobicoke North, Windsor-Tecumseh, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Timiskaming-Cochrane for their comments.

Just in summary, I didn't try to put a spin on the fact that there was anything negative about the bill. I'm just concerned with it. I've seen so many times in regulation where there are delay tactics or there are technicalities that stop people from getting the service or the intent of the bill. We have watched it over and over again, and I'll tell you, we—and, of course, most of the government members—are completely hidden from that. We don't get a chance to see it. We don't have a chance to have committee hearings on regulation. That's done by the people who run the bureaucracy here, and in most cases it's done well.

But at the same time, you have got to keep in mind that this bill is meant to help people during a very emotional time in their lives. It's a very traumatic time when they lose a child through a disappearance or a severe sickness. I can tell you, as a caregiver, I think that we really do need to make sure that whatever happens, we have an expediency in the regulations that allows them not to have any more heartache. That's really what I'm getting at here more than anything else—not to run into some wall where there's a bureaucracy of people out there, saying, "You can't have service" or "You can't have the time off' because of this, this and this, because we didn't clearly understand it. That's what I was getting at more than anything here.

The intent of the bill is great. I hope it works well, and the fewer cases we have to use it in, the better, because we'll have less people with that kind of sickness etc.

Thank you for the comments from the other members. I appreciated the opportunity this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. This bill hits pretty close to home. My best friends lost their daughter Robin, my godchild, a number of years ago. I still cannot even try to comprehend what they went through at that time and still, every day of their lives, continue to go through, to try to somehow move forward. This bill, Speaker, had it been enacted back in that time, would have allowed them some time to step back, some time to even know what was happening in their lives. Unfortunately, at the age we are raising young children—the realities of a mortgage, the realities of bills to pay—most of us feel very challenged to take any time off, because you have to have that to be able to continue your life the best that you know how. This would have

allowed them to be able to step back, to be able to grieve properly, to take some time and collect their thoughts, without the fear of whether they could afford it or worrying about whether their job would be there. They could have spent time with family and friends doing what they needed to do, and that was truly just recouping the loss that they had just suffered.

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Sadly, my wife's best friends from the UK had recently immigrated to this country and lost their son at 18 years old—very similar. They were in an even more stressful situation because they were trying to establish their lives here in our great country of Canada, our great province of Ontario, and in this case, Huron—Bruce is where they had moved to. Mr. Speaker, I can't even imagine what they did and continue to go through. They were looking for jobs. Fortunately, they had found some part-time work, but they really couldn't afford to step back. They had to just trudge through and do the best they could. They were trying to adjust from their life in England and moving here and the transition and the lack of family that they didn't have as a support circle.

Mr. Speaker, this bill-certainly, its time is due. A year ago, I spoke to this bill and I had concerns at that time that, again, there were some things that we wanted to be amended. I think it's shown that the committee structure that we have under our government structure can actually work. We can put amendments through. The committee debated—I wasn't fortunate enough to sit on that committee, so I don't know all of the exact detail that they went through and what they needed to detail through there, but I think the bill has come out with a good structure now. My biggest worry was that they were actually going to make you take weeks off at a time. That just, to me, doesn't work. It's not reality. It's not practical. People don't always have a seven-day schedule of appointments or the need that they may have to address. They need it when they need it. It can be a cumulative eight weeks. I believe that's the best way to serve—our health care system is moving to care at home. and that is something that I certainly support. We're going to have to do that with our aging demographic. However, we need to do things with practicality, we need to do them with strategy, and we need, when we're designing legislation, to do it with the reality of how the family is going to actually deal with it, how it actually will—I think my colleague from Simcoe North asked about the execution. He asked about how it'll actually be implemented out there.

I'm hopeful that Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, will actually parallel—which I'm glad to see—recent changes by the federal government to the Canadian labour code.

My caucus colleagues here on the PC side, the official opposition to the government, have listened.

I applaud the Liberal government, in this case, for actually listening to those amendments and making some changes—as opposed to how it was first introduced. It doesn't let them off the hook for trying to rush a bill

through with a lot of glaring errors in it. That is our job, and with the third party—some of their members spoke up and offered similar amendments. I think it does show that this government can work when we truly come to the table and actually put our hearts first and our constituents first. That's not always the case in here, but I'm not going to go down that path today.

The other thing that's important is this, is a bill that actually is not going to cost the government any money, because it isn't going to be related—people are going to have that ability. It may have an impact to the employer, and that's a challenge that I think—again, everything we do has to balance. As my colleague from Durham says, that is a cost to business, and we have to do everything in this House to ensure that we're not putting business at a disadvantage. Recently, this government, with their energy costs skyrocketing and going through the roof, has put business at a disadvantage. The red tape bureaucracy that they've created has put our businesses at a disadvantage. This piece of legislation, fortunately, has sidestepped some of those and not created more issues.

Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound called me and wrote to me about Bill 21 and said it was about time. Again, I just wish we could rewind the clock for those family members and friends of mine who have suffered through this without any type of legislation in place that could have helped them. But the reality is, like me coming into this House, I can't change the past. What I can do is work my hardest to change things going forward and ensure that we have that. They're the same people who called me when the government began cutting front-line health services, which bore an immediate impact on them and their loved ones.

Just for the record, this government, the Liberal government, started cutting back health in 2004, starting with physiotherapy and eye care, and gradually moved, more recently, to physiotherapy services for seniors. I do have some concerns still with the government, and my colleague from Simcoe North talked at length about health care and the crucial point where we are in our evolution as a province, the precipice that we're on. We can either do health care very well and ensure that we have the services and programs that we need, or we can play games with health care and try to make the headlines, but really not be concerned about the true impact to those people we're serving.

My constituents think it's a shame that front-line services are cut and replaced with more government bureaucracy like the LHINs and the CCACs. Again, my colleague from Simcoe North alluded to this. A lot of effort, a lot of energy and, unfortunately, a lot of financial resources are going to bureaucracy, administration and shuffling paper around, rather than where the focus should be, as it is in our white papers on health care. Everything should focus on the actual patient and the care they are going to need to receive.

We have LHINs and CCACs that are building huge fiefdoms out there. I know some of the people who work there. I meet with them fairly regularly. They're all very good people, and they have, I'm sure, the right intent at heart. But at the end of the day, I think, as a government we need to show leadership on the health care file. We need to not be allowing things that are getting in the way of patient care or, in fact, taking away from patient care to be allowed to continue. We'll look at that with a very strategic thought process to ensure that everything we do and every penny we spend as a government, as leaders who are representing the great people of this great province who give us the privilege of serving them, should be about health care and the services and programs across the spectrum of our portfolios that we're going to provide.

I may be getting off topic a little bit, but it's one of those things, again, where, every time I'm in this House, I just have to implore the government of the day, particularly the health minister and the finance minister: The Markdale hospital was committed to over 10 years ago to build a new hospital in Markdale. They challenged the community to go out and raise money. They did. There has been \$12 million sitting in the bank, which is fairly significant money for a small, rural area like Markdale. The people there rose to the challenge in record time. The money has been there. Now all they're asking for is a government to actually honour its commitment, to do the thing that they should do and, as my colleague from Northumberland-Quinte West often refers to in this House, do the honourable thing, to step up and actually commit to what they said they would.

I'm going to put another plug in. I truly hope, as this budget is being worked on, I'm told—although I think that they've leaked it a little ahead. There's lots of funding in there, I think \$5.7 billion more than they are actually bringing in, despite record revenues. I just hope that one small little sliver of that can be moved over to the Markdale hospital to make that a priority.

But Mr. Speaker, I don't want to get you in trouble or have someone stand on a point of order, so I'll get back

to Bill 21 more specifically.

One Markdale resident said: "I am asking that you continue to support people dealing with cancer and their families, and others with serious illnesses. I understand that Bill 21 ... would provide job security for family caregivers who take time to care for loved ones with a serious medical condition. Please help ensure that Bill 21 comes to a vote. All parties support it. It's time to vote and get it passed"—Lera Ryan, Markdale. Lera is one of our volunteers with our local Canadian Cancer Society, and to her credit, she yet again emailed me this morning. I'm sure she phoned the office, even though I've been in the House all day. She has probably been sending out tweets and everything else that she can do. She's just like our folks in the gallery, who really put their heart and soul into their efforts. You know what? We wouldn't have as great a province as we do without the volunteers like those in the audience and Lera Ryan.

Lera, hats off to you. Keep doing what you're doing, because I am listening. I am bringing your thoughts to the House, and I will do that every day that I have the privilege of standing here.

I also had a meeting with the Victorian Order of Nurses to review a report on the impact of those unpaid family and friend caregivers. As they say, with the way our aging demographic, the baby boomers, is moving, that's going to become more and more the trend. That's going to become more and more the way of life, and we need to be thinking about legislation that is going to enable those people to do that, to actually support and encourage, rather than finding—again, I think I recall my colleague from Simcoe North saying that he was concerned about some of the actual implementation and bureaucracy and regulation getting in the way of the spirit and intent of this type of legislation. I want to make sure, when this legislation is signed, that it does honour that spirit of intent, and that, at the end of the day, it's actually supportive and encouraging and finds ways to make it happen, as opposed to putting blockades in the way. Much of the legislation I've seen introduced, unfortunately, by the Liberal government, in my short tenure of two and a half years, is actually much more bureaucratic, putting speed bumps, preventing things from moving forward.

Home and Community Care in Canada: An Economic Footprint found that the estimated total spending for home and community care in 2010 ranged from \$9 billion to \$10.5 billion, accounting for between 4.6% and 5.5% of total health spending in Canada. That's a significant sum of money. We need to ensure that, again, like everything we do—and when I come to this House every day, my every thought is that every cent should be invested strategically, wisely, for the best outcomes, the productivity of getting people the most program and service that we can

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Another study estimated that the total economic contribution of unpaid caregivers in Canada was in the range of \$25 billion to \$26 billion in 2009 alone. Hats off to our volunteers. We could not have the great province that we have now—although there are a lot of things that we need to be doing better and need to strive to always improve—without those volunteers. That contribution of \$25 billion to \$26 billion in one year alone is just monumental, and we can't say enough. So hats off to all of those people out there in whatever capacity in which you volunteer in our great communities.

Of course, the demand for both unpaid and paid activities required to service the needs of home care recipients is going to continue to grow. It's expected, obviously, as that baby boomer moves through the system. Again, I implore all of us to come to this House with innovative thought processes. We can't continue to think of how it was done in the past and expect that to get us where we are.

A number that I remember was given to me shortly after I got here, when I was deputy critic of health care, was that by 2030, 80 cents of every single dollar in taxation we bring in was going to be allotted to health care if we keep going down the same path that we are today.

Mr. Speaker, we can't be tinkering at the edges. We need to be bold, we need to be innovative, but everything that we do, we have to do with the thought of the patient first. We have to think of this in human terms, not dollars and cents. We need to ensure that, always, the people are the fundamental, the absolute and the only priority that we're thinking of—obviously with some balance of fiscal responsibility, and I believe that's what we as Progressive Conservatives bring to the table. We bring fiscal responsibility with a social conscience. That certainly is how I come to this House. It's how I'll always represent myself in this House, despite what others may try to say at times when they stand and rise towards me. We need to always put the human element in everything we do, and this is a prime example.

In this case, I think we have to, again, think of Bill 21. I think it is a step in the right direction. It's going to allow people to take that time off in their time of need and not be fearful of losing their job, losing their house, losing their car or whatever they may be utilizing their funds to pay for. We all have bills to pay, and I think at a time like this you don't want to have that added stress and grief on top of an already challenging and traumatic situation, which is the case for most.

In recognizing all caregivers, I would like to remind the government of the recent calls they've put in-and our PC caucus colleagues, as well, have raised it in this House numerous times—to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as it concerns our seniors and access to life-saving drugs. On the issue of access to Esbriet, a drug approved by Health Canada two years ago as the first and only available treatment in Canada to treat IPF, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, I think it's absolutely shameful that the Ministry of Health is refusing to fund it. When we have our federal government that has already approved a drug, it absolutely baffles my mind why we here in Ontario cannot make this thing happen. Not "we," because I think with different leadership this wouldn't be happening. It drives me crazy when I hear the Minister of Health standing up and finding bureaucratic technicalities or saying, "We're still studying. We're still looking. We're still"—you know what? People's lives are on the line. We can waste a billion dollars on boondoggle gas plants to buy seats, but we can't fund life-saving treatment and medicines. In Canada, it's shameful; in Ontario, it's certainly shameful; and for the people that I represent in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the rest of the province, it's absolutely shameful. Twelve MPPs have raised this issue multiple times in the Legislature, either as a direct question to Minister Matthews, a statement made on behalf of a local constituent, or petitions read into the official record of Hansard. To date, over 3,000 Ontarians have signed their names to the IPF petition, and that support continues to grow every day.

Again, I implore the minister to take a sober second thought when she's really putting her priorities, when this government is looking at priorities. Again, they are going to find a way to spend \$5.7 billion more than they bring

in, despite record revenues, but they can't fund drugs that are actually going to help people and save lives in our province. It baffles me. I don't know how many times I can say it in this House. I think it's shameful. I think there's a better way that we can do some of these things. There are definitely better ways than how the Liberal government over the last 10 years have spent money, and I think we need to be focusing back on things like our medicine.

Interiection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for York-South Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: —speaking to the essence of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will say to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound that, of course, we want our remarks, obviously, to be relevant to the bill, and I would ask him to bring his comments back to the conditions of the bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: My pleasure, Mr. Speaker. I think it's actually a good reminder because I believe that the essence of the intent, the spirit of the intent of Bill 21, is, at the end of the day, to provide people the ability to provide better health care to those they love and to those who need the care. In this case, I do believe very factually that I'm speaking to the spirit and intent of the bill, because I'm talking about health care—perhaps on a bit broader thought process, perhaps on a bit broader stream, but health care is health care. Whether it's someone having time to spend and just hold the hand of a dear loved one in their last dying moments or whether it's actually providing a drug like Esbriet that is going to save the life of someone or extend the quality of life of someone, health care is health care is health care. I think that the day that we start worrying about the technicalities of whether someone is speaking to the bill as opposed to the spirit of health care and standing for those loved ones and those we care for-I'm going to stand and do what I can, Mr. Speaker.

I came here to make a difference. I came here to be able to put legislation in place that will actually improve the lives of Ontarians, improve the lives of those people I have the privilege and pleasure to serve and, most importantly, to all of the people but, most importantly, to the young people who are sitting in front of you and those I have at home, my friends, my loved ones—and those I don't even know.

We need a province that's going to have hope for the next generation, and we need to always put our best foot forward to ensure that any legislation we're putting in place has that in mind. We have to ensure that these great young people are going to have hope, that they want to remain in Ontario and want to be the next level of leaders. I believe that many of our pages that I speak to want to aspire to become politicians and show that leadership.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The pages?

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Absolutely, and I applaud them for that. They're taking part in democracy. They're actually the next generation that will become—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Get a good job.

Mr. Bill Walker: I can't believe, Mr. Gerretsen, you would say, "Get a good job." What more noble job than serving the people of our great province? This is a fabulous job, and I want to implore every one of those pages to give consideration to standing in this House proudly and stepping up for the people who need it the most: the undertrodden; those most in need; those people who need care and hope and, at the end of the day, as I've said numerous times, whether that be a hand to hold, a listening ear or just the knowledge that someone actually is stopping in their day to care for you.

I've had calls, getting back to specifics—people caring for family members with Alzheimer's are calling my office for help in accessing a long-term-care bed for their

parents and loved ones.

So I get back to my colleague across the floor: This is about health care. We need to make decisions that are going to help. We see all kinds of need out there in the health care sector, and we need to do that.

As you should be aware, seniors labelled with behavioural issues or dementia or Alzheimer's have a much more difficult time accessing a bed as they're labelled "difficult clients." Today, people suffering from dementia in Ontario will wait an average of 113 days for a long-term-care bed, and this varies considerably across the province, with some regions waiting for over eight months. Think of that family again—and it comes back to this Bill 21. Those family members can maybe step in and be that helping hand to move them through that transition, a very daunting time in life for those who are suffering from such ailments, to be able to move out of their home into a whole new surroundings. So this bill will allow those people to be part of that process. This will allow those people to step up and, without fear of recrimination from an employer, fear of losing again whatever their valued possessions may be—it gives them the opportunity to be able to do that.

I'm just going to close on one of the colleagues— Etobicoke North stood up here and was a bit sanctimonious, I believe, suggesting that democracy is not being served because there's a lot of time being spent debating this bill. I'd like to bring to the attention of those people listening at home that the government agencies committee—three members from the Liberal Party spent four months from the committee just to get a simple study released to them. So I don't think he should be standing in the House giving us lectures when we're standing up trying to make sure that the needs of our constituents are brought to the House. That's my democratic right. It's the right of the people who actually elected me. In a bill that I believe is absolutely crucial to care provision going forward, I will do what I can every day to stand in this House and bring my story to do whatever I can to influence the passage of this bill.

It's something that's long overdue. As I referenced in my opening remarks, I have a personal connection to families that could have benefited greatly from a bill such as this, Mr. Speaker—the ability to step back and actually take time to just even understand what's going on in their lives, such as the traumatic loss of a child. I'm pleased, as I said earlier, that the three parties seem to have brought two more thought processes. We have the amendments in place. I think the bill is much better than when it was rushed through the door the first time. I'm hopeful that when we get to the vote process in the very near future, everyone will stand up and commit to it and we'll have this legislation enacted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He's a bit of a fast talker. I mean that in the best-case scenario. He's the fastest talker in this place.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's just fast; it's just plain fast.

It's interesting, because I think some of his comments are contradictory, if I could put it so plainly. He has made the case that health care is health care is health care. Yet there is no doubt about it that under the previous government, the privatization of health care slid right into this province like a snake that we are dealing with day in and day out. Unfortunately, it has been supported as well by the current government that is in this House here.

But there is a lot of good in trying to bring legislation to this House which actually would support families, as they go through a very stressful time, around caregiving. There is actually a family in my riding today that is making a very difficult decision with regard to their son, and they need this. They need the relief and the assurance that they will not lose their livelihood because of a very serious family crisis with their child. I think that we have to put that at the forefront of the discussions that we have in this place.

I do think that the bill has been strengthened through, quite honestly, the co-operation between—as the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has mentioned, we did co-operate and were able to strengthen this legislation. I do think that that speaks to the potential of a minority government, quite honestly.

Member Randy Hillier brought forward the issue of rural and remote communities where doctors can't sign off on these leaves, and so you would have to have a registered nurse or a psychologist, and that's a good recommendation.

We did build some flexibility into it, and so it's a better piece of legislation that is before us today. I look forward to further comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to introduce Katherine Muirhead, who is with the caregiver coalition. I believe that she's on the side there. Thank you very much, for not only all the work that she does but that all the members of the coalition do.

I know there are a lot of people around Ontario who watch this channel on a regular basis, and they must be

wondering: Why is it that if all of the members in the House seem to agree on certain bills—and this is certainly one of them—why don't they just get on with it? So I'm going to tell them exactly what's happening here, from my perspective. We've already had about 20 hours of debate on this bill.

On the one hand, we have the Conservatives, who are saying, "We want each and every member to speak for 20 minutes on this bill"—which would be something like 600 minutes—no, more than that; about 800 minutes—"to just keep talking." That would take about two weeks just on this one bill alone.

On the other hand, we have the NDP saying, "Yes, we want this bill passed. How do we get this done quickly so that it can go off to committee?" There is only one way to do it, and that is through a programming motion, sometimes called time allocation.

Now, here is the real dilemma. The real dilemma is that the NDPs philosophically don't believe in time allocation. The Tories will never vote for time allocation. So instead, we have a bill here, like so many other bills, that will never, ever—well, at least for a long period of time—be dealt with and go on for second and third readings.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an abuse of process.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's really an abuse of process. You have got the right to speak on this; I realize that. But the work that we're supposed to be doing here, Speaker, just doesn't get done because of the process that is continually happening in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I came in here to listen to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound because he always brings an interesting perspective to it. He tried to relate it to some of the relationships to the budget: jobs and the economy. That's basically what I heard always weaving in and out of his comments.

This bill—a bit of history on it—has been here for a while. It has been here in a different form. I want to commend the government for sort of harmonizing with the federal government, and I mean this sincerely. I think we looked at the changes made federally under the Canada labour code. This bill does many of the things that were suggested in debate.

Initially, the bill was completely inflexible. You had to take a whole week off to take your ill loved one for a chemotherapy treatment. Now, it has at least introduced some flexibilities. I recognize, of course, those people who work in the industry, and I thank them for their commitment to making life better for people in Ontario.

I'm commending the government here, in fairness. It got to committee. It's been amended. You're doing the right thing, but to say for one moment—denying us the right to represent the views of our constituents is simply wrong. It's simply wrong, and you shouldn't use that to expedite—for instance, today I met with people from a group with the acronym NIED. It means the National Initiative for Eating Disorders. This is another case in

health care where it's not recognized under the Mental Health Act, but it affects mainly young women, from what I've been told.

But there's more to be done, and when you're looking at giving people time off, you've got to recognize that the federal government has come in with EI, funding some of those leaves. That's a good thing. Otherwise, it doesn't cost this government one nickel. It requires the employer to hire the replacement person, and that is still to be resolved, how they're going to recognize that under income tax law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I just want to add some comments to the debate with respect to the bill being discussed here today in third reading. It's not the first time this bill has seen the light of day. When the government had a majority government, at the time, I believe—

Interjection.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** There we are. Thank you very much. It had an opportunity to pass this bill and unfortunately, it didn't happen, and then—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: You wanted it expanded, but the ministry—

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Okay, yes. The Minister of Labour, then Linda Jeffrey, introduced the bill and she wanted to have it passed. Good for her. As the member opposite said, they wanted to expand it. Here we are today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: You wanted it expanded.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We wanted to expand it. Well, I'll get that right. We wanted to expand it, and good for us, because look at the improvements that we have made to this bill to actually work for people who wanted that time off. Great work, I have to say. If the expansions meant that it got delayed and brought to this House and it went to committee and we changed the definition of who can write the medical leave and how much time you can take off when it's needed—that's actually a great thing to have happened.

I know that the members have talked about the fact that we've gone on and on and on about this bill, but I know, particularly, two people in London, Netty and Wayne, who watch the federal Legislature and they also watch the provincial Legislature; they are always very interested in all the debates that happen. They're kind of legislative junkies who follow around—they're those fans who follow us

I'm just glad this bill has had the opportunity and second time around to have that expansion, because it is a better bill for those discussions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his response.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure. My colleague from Durham stood up and offered some very good insights, as he always does. I just want to say, I want to strive at some point to be as effective a member of this House as Johnny O'Toole.

The Chair of Cabinet also spoke, the former Attorney General, and I have to say, it disheartens me a little bit to hear him saying in a roundabout way that he wants to usurp democracy yet again. Of all people, I would have thought that he should want all of us to have our day, to be able to say what we need to.

I'll use the Green Energy Act as a prime example. They stripped the rights of democracy from our local municipal politicians, and yet they stand here and tell us that we should just steamroll more stuff. I think we're going to pay for that for 20 years. We'll always take our time in here to debate whatever we need to debate and

ensure we step up for them.

At any point, we would definitely step aside. We did the last session. We said, "We'll clear the decks of some of this other legislation if we'll be talking about jobs and the economy and the future of our young people. We'll do that any day of the week." This, under the government rule, could have already been in. I spoke about it a year ago. If they truly had it as a priority, I believe it would be done today. I'm not going to stand here and take much from them from the perspective of how they want to, again, steamroll things, because we've seen that they've doubled the debt, they've got a deficit despite record revenues; they still aren't providing the care for people out there in need.

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We heard from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who called me a fast talker. I will take that as a credit. I am a bit of an auctioneer on the side. I figure the number of words per minute—I'm probably getting good value. My constituents are getting good value for money, Mr. Speaker, and I'll continue to do that.

Of course, the member from London–Fanshawe, I think, made a good, credible comment. This is a bill that went through the right process. They brought a terrible bill. We all took a shot at it. We made amendments. We've improved that bill with three-party support. Now, at some point, the vote will come when the time comes, it will be passed and the people of Ontario will be well served.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I am now going to add my voice, again, to Bill 21, the family caregiver leave—

**Interjection:** You've spoken already.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've just been advised that the member has already spoken to third reading of this bill, just to remind him.

Further debate? The member for Beaches-East York.

Interjection: He has already spoken.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd just like to explain the procedure to members. If you'd like to speak, you stand up. The member for Beaches—East York stood up; I recognized him.

Further debate?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I'm somewhat amazed by the normal procedure that—people had the chance to talk in party order, but that's been deviated from here.

Anyway, I wanted a chance to talk to Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crimerelated child death or disappearance leaves of absence. I think it's an important issue in our society that we're able to stand up and give people who are in their worst nightmares some time to at least not worry about their jobs.

This is a bill that is not going to cost this government anything. They have the ability to make a difference in people's lives. Unfortunately, I think that people in this House—all parties included—know too many people who have gone through such an instance or such a terrifying event. This legislation—there's a real need to provide at least some comfort that at least you know your job will be there after. You're forced, generally, lots of times without any knowledge—an idea that something is going to happen. It could be a car accident; it could maybe be a disease; or it could be something that comes through over a longer period of time. But it's still an issue where people need to be able to not worry about their employment and know that at the end of it, in the case where many of the times they're saving the government money—I mean, they're keeping the person at home, or they're attending to them sometimes in the hospital, but knowing all along that likely the procedures are not going to be successful, and they'll need to have the protection of knowing that their job will be there when they go back.

Speaker, this is not the first time we've seen this legislation through. We talked earlier about Bill 30 that went through, and, of course, it died when the House was prorogued by the former Premier. We all know why that happened. Of course, we went through the cost of the power plant cancellations. There's no arguing here that they were being put in the wrong place—

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Point of order: Mr. Speaker, I'd like you to rule on if he is talking on the topic that is being debated today or if he is talking about

his own riding. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'd ask the member to speak to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Well, Speaker, I believe that I was talking about the former bill here, Bill 30, that was the same bill, and it's being brought back. From what I heard numerous times this afternoon, it was essentially mainly the same bill.

We were just talking about how this is a government that thought that was an important bill back then. I was giving them some credit that they're bringing it back. I was just talking about the circumstances along with that legislation, which is very similar to the legislation we're seeing today, other than it was one of the many bills that fell off the table when the House was prorogued over the gas plant scandal—something that they talk very much about in my riding. This one resident in my riding said that he had to get his medication for his blood pressure actually doubled because of the issues with this government. Anyway, I know that some of those things aren't

something the government likes to hear, but it's certainly something in my riding that gets talked about a lot.

Speaker, we're very happy that this government brought this bill back—Bill 21—and we were able to get some important amendments through on this bill, because I think that we have a wealth of knowledge on both sides of the House and I think we listen to our constituents every day, so we need to be able to bring back some issues. I know that personally, I sat through a committee where we tried to bring some amendments through, and they were steamrolling—I think that's a good word—because there were no amendments accepted from either one of the opposition parties, even though I thought that they made a lot of sense and it was something that was done in every other jurisdiction of this country that actually had such a bill in place.

We all know that it's important that this bill proceeds. We know that, especially in times of need, people are going to address it. I know that we don't know who will be next, who will need protection from such a bill. When it was first introduced as Bill 30-and I've had two neighbours who actually have suffered this type of a loss; in one case, a good friend of the family where his young daughter, 24 years old, had a relapse into cancer. The lady kept her daughter at home through some very trying times—rehabilitation, lots of operations—and she ended up losing her job because the company couldn't wait any longer; a large company, which would have qualified under this bill. In spite of that, she kept on working and saw things to the bitter end. It's too bad that somebody who is working so hard on trying to help out her daughter-that actually the health system would be penalized in such a way.

Again, unfortunately, just last year, we had another neighbour of ours—a great community leader over the years who spent many years supporting the church, local library, Sir John Johnson House—not feeling well, kept going with some of her volunteer work and actually made it through the local church supper and then went into the hospital, I believe, that week. She was immediately put in intensive care and spent months and her final days going through a system that I would have to say failed her. She spent weeks trying to get testing done—tests were delayed, were not considered a high enough priority. I don't know how a person in intensive care would be bumped by people with higher priorities month after month, and eventually by the time they identified what the issue was, I guess the rest is history.

We want to make sure that we not only have something that protects people when they are working, but we want something that actually protects your lives. We need a health care system that's there and able to respond to people and people's needs and get the proper testing done, so that the proper diagnosis can be done in a timely manner and the treatment can actually start. In this case, it certainly was a sad day for the community and certainly for the family, and this neighbour's husband, Dan—we go back to the ice storm, where we were over 30 days without power—took leave off his work and

helped the township; an electrical engineer who was able to really help at setting up generators, some of the large generators that actually serve some of the villages in town. Really, somebody who came back, and it's just sad to see just what happened.

I'm quite proud of our community, as we have always been one that is there to support. We have two active cases now. We have two young teachers who are battling through. One of them is trying to raise money to get some treatment in the States. So it goes on all the time, and it's somewhere this bill really has a chance to make a difference.

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I'm somewhat taken aback by some of the comments on not allowing the opposition to debate this bill. I think this is very important. I know the member from Etobicoke North stood up and said that we should just push through with this. That's such a stark contrast to some of the work we've done in committee, government agencies, where we sat and tried for four months to release a document on Metrolinx, and three people were allowed to talk over and over again, meeting after meeting. I think it's important that we hear debate, but it's got to be reasonable debate. In that case, three members were allowed to repeat every meeting. The goal really was clear: another study that was produced by this government. I'm not sure why the resistance to release it. It's another cost study, so I guess that's a serious problem for this government. Any time there's a cost study or cost project being done, we seem to see issues with it being well overspent.

I want to go on record that we support this bill, and we're glad to see that they were able to make some changes. We think that the bill, in its former version as Bill 30, which people were upset that I mentioned that time—if it had gone through and the House hadn't been prorogued, we would have seen this. It would have made a big difference for the two people I talked about, who just last year and the year before lost a loved one. In one case, she lost her job and was forced to look for another one.

Times can be bad, and I don't think we can't appreciate just how hard they are unless we've been through that. This bill will certainly supply some support. Thank you for speaking on that topic today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his thoughtful remarks, and particularly for sharing the experiences of the constituents in his riding and the fact they would have benefited from this legislation a year and two years ago respectively. I think it's also important to note that the member draws out the fact that one of the reasons why this bill is now before the House for a second time is because the government prorogued this Legislature. As a result, this bill died on the order paper. So it's important to take that into consideration as well.

I also just want to add, in terms of the debate, that some other members have mentioned that we are going to see in the coming days and years—more so, years—that the demographic of our province is shifting, and there are going to be more and more seniors in our province. There's going to be a larger population of elders. The reality is that more and more of us are going to need to care for loved ones as they age. We need to have a serious discussion about what that's going to look like. How can we as a society deal with that growing aging population, and how are we going to be able to take care of them?

The reason why I bring this up is, the family caregiver leave allows for people to take leave for a critically ill family member. More and more, we're seeing that people are critically ill, but they're critically ill with chronic diseases or illnesses. These aren't illnesses that will get better in a week, a couple of weeks or even in a year. These are illnesses that require management that may take multiple years to heal and to deal with. We need to have a very serious discussion about what we can do to create a system that's sustainable that actually can care for people. We need to start having that discussion very soon, because the reality is this question needs to be answered in the upcoming years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, you may be interested to know that this bill has now had 13 hours of debate. The bill that the House agrees on had 13 hours of debate in second reading and seven hours on third reading. Sixty-nine members have spoken, in one way or another, to this bill. It seems to me, when we have a consensus, in terms of the legislation, that we should be moving forward. This is exactly why the public sees legislative bodies as being gridlocked and not doing their job appropriately.

I really agree: If I were sitting in opposition and I were adamantly opposed to a highly contentious bill, it's quite

legitimate to keep the debate going.

This is third reading. When I came to this Legislature 37 years ago, there was no debate on third reading. You had first reading, of course, which is very routine; a fulsome second reading debate; committee; it came back for third reading, and that was it.

It is an absolute abuse of the Legislature to continue on third reading of this. If we were on second reading, I could understand that.

There are pieces of legislation that one of the parties or both parties in opposition may be adamantly opposed to.

I remember that Peter Kormos, on behalf of the trial lawyers of this province, got up and fought against an insurance bill we had, from which, at that time, removed the right to sue for a lot of different things. The lawyers loved him forever for that, the lawyers who were involved with that; some of the victims would have as well. He went on for many, many days. While it may have been inconvenient, I thought that was quite legitimate.

Here we have a piece of legislation we all agree on. We've been to committee with this. There was a chance to advance opinions at that time and have the public before us. It's time to pass this piece of legislation and debate extensively on other bills, if necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I commend the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his interest in this issue and his reason and purpose for standing and participating.

I'm quite disappointed by the Minister of the Environment bullying us, basically, into silence. I want to hear from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—I've heard him speak on this endlessly in caucus: how frustrated he is with how little is being done—and/or the member from Sarnia–Lambton. These are just a couple of the people in my caucus that I'm confident will add value to the debate.

This is simply a copy of the federal legislation. This bill has been around in this form, under Bill 21, since March 2013. It's April 2014. If they wanted to get this done, they have the tools; they have the power; they have the clout. They could get it done. It's my view that they're blaming it all on the federal government because the federal government, under the EI plan and their changes under employment standards Canada, already cover some of this on EI. So it's not costing them a nickel. They are the government. Use the tools and get the job done.

Quit trying to bully us into silence. I can't believe it.

I can hardly wait to speak on this bill. I haven't had nearly enough time to draw attention to specific cases of people with anorexia. That's not covered under this bill. It's not recognized as a treatable—I can only say this: I know the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry was intent on making a point. There are other members in our caucus. I want to hear nothing more about trying to silence this side of the House to make the points of why we support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting: There's a very philosophical debate happening in this House today about who should be speaking, how long we should be speaking. It does occur to me, though, based on the comments by the Minister of the Environment, that when it suits the Liberals, they don't like the debate to continue. When it suits the Liberals, they can make things happen really quickly. When it suits the Liberal government, they can move things. They had the ability for almost eight years, as a majority government, to make things happen really quickly. Things happened that actually weren't in the best interests of the people of this province during that period of time.

When the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry talks about health care in general—and he spoke, I think, as we all like to do, with great feeling about the people who are in our ridings. When we sit here, we bring all those people with us to this Legislature, and that is as it should be. It does strike me,

though—and this is a consistent theme that I will bring up each and every time—that they've made recommendations on policies and legislation that should have happened over the last two and half years, and yet they've missed opportunity after opportunity, with two budget cycles, to actually impact the legislation that happens in the province of Ontario. Those are missed opportunities. It resonates across the province: When people see politicians come to this Legislature, they want to hear them. They want to hear their concerns reflected in the debate that happens in this House, but they also want to see those politicians do some work and make sure that things get done during the budget process—especially in the new reality, which is a minority government.

It has taken us some time. I think that we have weathered through two very productive budget sessions, and yet the members, including the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, have missed those opportunities, which, quite honestly, is quite unfortunate. 1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the speakers who stood up to comment on my brief chance to talk about Bill 21.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on the issue of prorogation—I think that was well put. We're back here for that reason. Certainly the aging population is a concern and I think one thing that really highlights the need for this bill.

I was quite shocked, as the member from Durham was, to hear the comments about really trying to push things through. I think we've seen a government that has put through bills that have hurt this economy, and it was interesting to hear their finance minister talk just last week, saying that he predicts Ontario's real gross domestic product will average 2.1% between 2014 and 2035—that's 20 years—compared to the US, nationally, the other provinces, and globally; we're going to lag behind the rest of the world, essentially. Do you know what the problem was? He blamed it on the aging population, which is a problem that most of these countries that are ahead of us are suffering from as well.

I think, really, the problem is 10 years of this Liberal government. We see companies leaving all the time because we're no longer competitive—high hydro rates, high payroll taxes. People are leaving. Unfortunately, around home, we're close to the New York State border and you pick up advertisements from them advertising, "Come across, save money." Lower hydro rates, low property taxes; this is where we are failing.

That's why we have a problem with letting this government pass any more legislation. We've offered, if they are going to deal with the jobs, to actually work with them, but they refuse to deal with jobs. So we're afraid of what the next legislation will be because it's obviously going to be detrimental to the people of Ontario and the

people in my riding, who say that they can take no more from this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to stand. I'd like to preface my remarks because a great many comments are being made here today about this bill and about passing this bill, and I think probably all members of the Legislature will want to pass this bill in the fullness of time. I don't think there's any question at all that this bill will probably get unanimous approval when it comes to a vote, whether that be today or tomorrow or next week. It's not going to take a whole long time for it to actually get in front of us, but I must take some umbrage at some of the statements that are being made here today.

The opposition obviously has a right to make comment on a bill, whether it's at first or second or third reading. Certainly, the opposition had a right and did the correct thing in making amendments to this bill, because this bill was not in very good shape on a number of serious points. But here we are, standing up, and the Minister of the Environment and the former Attorney General and now the minister responsible for cabinet are saying, "No, just pass this bill. Just do this, and just do this." This place is a place where we try to listen to each other, or we should try to listen to each other. There are many, many bills; this is a good one, but there are other good bills that are before this House that never even get this far because the reality of this House, of this Legislature, is that only the government can bring a bill forward to third reading. The government, in its wisdom, has decided to bring this particular bill forward for third

Ms. Catherine Fife: And then they complain about it.
Mr. Michael Prue: And then certainly has complaints when the opposition wants to talk about it.

I think that the opposition, as well, has legitimate complaints about those bills that are not brought forward for third reading; those bills that have gone through the committee process, that are every bit as far advanced as this bill was, before it was called back for third reading, and the government sits there and refuses to call them. Some of them are opposition bills; some of them are bills that the opposition has put forward themselves; some of them are just bills that the opposition agrees so fundamentally with that we want them to be brought forward, and this government chooses not to.

This is not a one-sided debate, ministers. This is not a one-sided debate. If the government expects co-operation in all things in this House and that the opposition ought not to debate certain bills and should pass them because we are in agreement, then certainly that flows the other way, too. Certainly that flows, that when the opposition wants a bill that the government agrees to, the government should bring it forward for third reading. A little bit of give and take in this Legislature would go a long way, and I have not witnessed that, and it's very easy to witness.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, just briefly, for 30 seconds at the most, I would like to talk about two bills

that certainly stick in my craw and stick in the craw of the members of the New Democratic Party.

My colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has a bill that's going to help child actors. That bill has gone right through first reading and second reading and gone to committee. It was extensively changed by the Liberals, particularly by the Minister of Labour. It is ready to come back for third reading, yet the government won't call it back. I also have a bill that has had the same problem. My bill is Bill 49, to deal with servers and tips so that the servers get to keep the tips that are intended for them and they're not siphoned into the pockets of their employers. That has gone all the way through and is waiting to be called back as well. But the government doesn't call those bills back for third reading because they're not government bills, even though every single member on that side of the House has voted for both of those bills, both in this House and in committee, and they're ready to go.

If the government wants some kind of co-operation on this bill or a bill like it, then maybe the government should start doing something that's reasonable in this House so that we can all maybe get along a little bit better, because we need to get along better.

This is a good bill. This is a bill that should pass and should pass rapidly. But when you come into a place that the government tries to control, and they won't let the opposition voice the positions they have and won't hear them out on bills of other magnitude which they think are important as well, then this is the result. If the result is that it's not proceeding as quickly as the government might wish today, I think the government ought to look at themselves first as to why it's not proceeding rather than blaming the opposition members for speaking to the bill.

I only have 10 minutes. I don't even think I'm going to use the whole 10 minutes. This is a good bill that needs to pass. It is a good bill because it's going to provide support for family members who need that support. It is in conjunction with other bills that we have passed in recent history that also provide support to family members when they need it and are able to maintain their employment, to go back to their employment. Certainly, it is intended to help Ontarians to weather the storms of life. Life is not always kind. Life does not always lead you where you're supposed to go. People get sick, people die, children go missing—all kinds of things happen all the time. This bill is going to help.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about at least two small points. The bill going to committee was a good thing. The bill going to committee changed two things.

It changed the amount of time that a person can take off; they don't need to take it in one-week blocks. They can take it a day or two at a time. They can take it afternoons only if that's the way they need it. The government fought that tooth and nail; they opposed it. Even in committee, they took the side of some employers who thought that this was going to be difficult or problematic to implement rather than taking the side of families and individuals who thought that this was going to work out

better for them when they only amass an amount of eight weeks a year and considering that they could take it little dribs and drabs at a time in order to accomplish their family's needs. The government opposed that. Thankfully, I don't hear any opposition to that in third reading.

The second thing was the serious medical condition. This has been amended to include chronic or episodic issues. For example, I think it's going to now include such things as dementia, epilepsy and recurring MS, which it wasn't going to before. I give kudos to all sides of the House: to the government for bringing it forward, but to the opposition as well, for making those amendments and carrying it through in committee to make a good bill a better bill.

Now, back to the ministers who spoke about getting this pushed forward: I would be happy to vote on it as soon as it comes up for a vote, after all of us who need to speak have spoken. But I also ask the government to try to bring back some of the bills from the opposition parties, and see how we can make this place more collegial and actually get things done. That's the day that the Legislature is going to work the way it should.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to add my comments to Bill 21. I actually first spoke to this bill when it was called Bill 30, and we were referencing that earlier in the debate. I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour at the time, and I shepherded that bill through the House then.

It has gone through a lot of changes. Good changes have happened since then. We have taken the time to talk about it: then, because it was being spoken to intensively by a number of members; and after the government brought it back. It has been through second reading. It has been through committee, through full days of committee, as we mentioned. Many changes have happened, good changes.

But now it has been, I believe, over 20 hours of debate. I do respect the democratic right of each member to speak to a bill. At the same time, I'm very cognizant of the families who are waiting. This bill could make a difference in their lives sooner rather than later. If we pass it for third reading now, if we could move forward, then we can help families now.

Again, yes, we all want to have and exercise our democratic right, but at the same time, we have to also be very mindful of the people who we represent and the difference we can make in their lives.

As far as private members' bills are concerned—and I refer to the member from Beaches–East York—even government members have bills. My private member's bill has gone through second reading. It still has to go through committee. So yes, it's a give-and-take.

But this one, we all agree upon. We have over 70 members who have spoken to it. I think that because we're all in agreement, and because families are waiting, we have to make a difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I always listen with intentness to my colleague from Beaches-East York, and that's not because of the M&M's that he apparently gives out in his office and which I haven't made it down there to have yet.

He made a very valid point, I think, about the ability for all of us to work together and actually do what this House and what we are all sent here to do.

I'm going to just deviate a little bit from him for a minute, because the Minister of the Environment said something a little bit ago about us abusing the power of this House. I think that's a little bit fresh, coming from a government that has two criminal investigations going against it, that wasted \$1.2 billion that isn't going to health care, isn't going to help the people of this great province—the eHealth boondoggle, and I can go on and on.

We have said, throughout the two and a half years I have been here, to bring substantive bills to this House, like the jobs. We brought the Million Jobs Act to the floor of this House to debate. There are a million people

unemployed.

We have brought debates here about—they've got record revenues, and they continue—someone was talking about how they like to do things fast in this House. Well, what they did in a fast eight years is, they doubled the debt of this great province. Why aren't we talking about that more in this House? Why are they not prepared to bring those types of issues to the table to debate and have a fulsome debate?

At the end of the day, I'm taken a little bit aback. The Minister of the Environment has been here a lot longer than me, but at the end of the day, I think that one was a little fresh even for him to bring up, when we're doing all this.

To my colleague from Beaches–East York: I do believe there is an ability here for us to work together collaboratively, to bring the best, and I think this bill is indicative of that. It was a terrible bill when it was brought. It was rushed, like many of the things the Liberals have tried to do. We took it to committee, which is where it needed to go, to have those amendments that we brought forward as a collective, and now it's going to be a stronger bill. We do need to get it to the vote. We do need to get it out there, because at the end of the day, we're here to put legislation that will serve the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Ms.** Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Beaches–East York, because he just brings the history and the context of the way that this place, the Legislature, works.

I think the most salient point that he made is that only governments can bring forward bills to third reading. Personally, I haven't made it through the entire House of Commons procedures and policies yet, so I think I had

forgotten that, but now it rings so false to see the members of the government stand up and complain about us debating this piece of legislation.

I do think that there are very good pieces of legislation that are sitting in the queue, that are waiting. What a wonderful thing it would be for this minority government to actually extend sort of a collaborative and co-operative attitude to seeing some of those pieces make it through the Legislature in a very expedient way.

That said, definitely, Bill 21 deserves our full attention and our full debate. We have worked together to try to strengthen it and make it better, and I think that's a good exercise in democracy. It is a good example that minority governments can work. I think that we should try to lead by example.

I think also, though—when I first came, I only sat here for 11 days before prorogation happened, so it's really

personal for me—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Oh, what?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know, I know. When the then-Premier prorogued this Parliament to run away from a certain issue that, quite honestly, sort of discombobulated the whole province, I brought forward a bill limiting the powers of prorogation. It's sitting there. It's a beautiful piece of legislation, actually. It really is. It needs our full attention, because I feel that perhaps there's a ghost of prorogation coming into the building now. I feel people are getting uncomfortable. So I would welcome further debate on the issue of prorogation as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 21.

Interjections.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I'm pleased to hear that my colleagues opposite are pleased for me to stand to speak in support of Bill 21.

We know that this bill has been debated for 13 hours during second reading and another seven hours in third reading, for a total of almost 20 hours. Over 70 members of the Legislature have either spoken in support of the bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments.

Most importantly, I heard attentively this afternoon the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound say, "We're here to serve the people." I also heard the member from Beaches–East York speak so eloquently, always with passion, about working collectively and collegially, about bringing private members'—I totally get it. I really agree with the member from Beaches–East York. So at the end of the day, if we all support Bill 21 and we're here to serve the people, I need to challenge my colleague opposite, saying, "What next?" Ontarians, we know, are waiting for us to pass Bill 21. At the end of the day, individuals and families are waiting patiently to see us supporting them but also improving their lives, because at the end of the day, this bill will improve the lives of Ontarians, and that's what it's all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from York South-Weston, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Kitchener-Waterloo and Scarborough-Agincourt for actually listening to my speech. All of you referred to things that I had said. That is sometimes, Mr. Speaker—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Rare.

Mr. Michael Prue: —rare in this place. Oftentimes, the two-minutes hits are used to score points and counterpoints rather than to actually comment on what the

person making the speech had to say.

To my two Liberal colleagues: Yes, I think that this place can work far better than it does. I think everybody in this entire room knows that if there was more of a feeling of collegiality, as used to exist in this Legislature back 37 years ago when the environment minister first arrived—he will tell you that this place was a much more collegial place, that members on opposite sides used to go out for dinner together; they used to go to parties together; they used to talk together; they used to understand that, "We can spend a lot of time on a contentious bill, and let's pass four or five of these that we all agree with," and it was done.

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That is not what happens in here anymore. Would that it did, because a bill like this—we should not be spending a long time on the bill. The long time needed to be spent in committee to make the amendments that were made—now that those amendments have been made, and it appears that all parties have agreed with those amendments, then we should get on with it. I don't have any difficulty in saying that.

I am hoping that we don't hear an enormous number of speeches. But I do want it on the record—I felt compelled to speak, because I did not have a chance to speak to it at second-level debate, and I did want my voice to be heard on how important I think this legis-

lation is and how it needs to be passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill 21, which is An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence.

I should point out that I'm wearing my Ontario tartan today because yesterday, April 6, was Tartan Day. The member from Wellington-Halton Hills actually did a member's statement earlier today to bring attention to

Tartan Day

There is a lot that has been said about the speed with which this bill is moving through the legislature. It should be pointed out that it doesn't seem to be a huge priority of the government, because they actually introduced this bill for first reading on March 5, 2013, and then it wasn't until September 25, 2013, that second reading debate occurred. Then, of course, it was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government and was reported back to the Legislature on November 7, 2013. Obviously, a lot of time has passed until now, and we're just finally in third reading debate on the bill.

It has also been pointed out that originally this bill was Bill 30, and then the Legislature prorogued when former Premier McGuinty stepped aside. That causes all bills that are on the order paper to die. By the sounds of things, with Bill 30, that is perhaps a good thing, because there was a lot of criticism of Bill 30, and this Bill 21 is a significant improvement over Bill 30.

I think it's worth noting also that when you look at a copy of Bill 21, the copy we now have before us, it shows all the stroked-out parts that have been amended, and it has been significantly amended, significantly improved, so that now it looks like there is all-party support

of the bill. That's a good thing.

I did want to discuss a few things that are relevant to my constituents. I'll start with one part that came up when a company in the Muskoka area brought it to my attention—a larger company, that employs a couple of hundred people.

Currently, there are only two leaves available to workers in Ontario that are protected under the Employment Standards Act. One is family medical leave, which is unpaid, job-protected leave for up to eight weeks in a 26-week period. For you to be eligible for that one, a qualified health practitioner must issue a certificate stating that the individual to be cared for has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks. Under the federal Employment Insurance Act, six weeks of employment insurance benefits may be paid to EI-eligible employees under this leave.

The other type, and that's the one I wanted to talk about, is personal emergency leave. Some employees have the right to take up to 10 days of unpaid, job-protected leave each calendar year due to illness, injury, and certain other emergencies and urgent matters. This is only eligible for individuals who work for a company that regularly employs more than 50 employees.

A Muskoka-based company brought this issue to my attention, saying that, in their case, they were having employees abuse that specific provision. This winter has been a good example: It's been a great year for ice fishing and it seems that some employees have been using their 10 days, which are supposed to be for urgent means, to—a good thing to do in Parry Sound–Muskoka is to go ice fishing—but obviously that has created some problems for the company. They wanted to bring that to my attention. I don't know what the exact solution, necessarily, is to that, but I just wanted to make the point that that is a concern.

This bill that we have before us now is Bill 21. Really, what it's about is allowing caregivers to focus on what matters most; that is, caring for loved ones without the risk of losing their job.

It's worth pointing out that there is no provincial cost to this bill.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that for most good employers, where you have an employee who has some family emergency—a parent, a child, whatever—I think most companies don't need a law to tell

them that their employee should have time off work and not risk losing their job. However, there are some employers who do need this law so that their employees are safe, and they don't have to worry when they have to care for a loved one that they may lose their job.

I think it was the member from the Simcoe North who also brought up small business and the fact that if you have a relatively small business—especially for the owners of the companies—many of these rules we create

don't, in a practical sense, apply to them.

I can think of my own situation, owning a small resort in Muskoka. I had a couple of accidents over the 25-odd years that I ran the resort. On one occasion, I pulled my thumb off on a power takeoff—I was trying to attach a snow blower to a tractor. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, as the owner of the company, at that point, basically, it doesn't matter what you've done; if you can, you still go to work. Luckily, it was our slower time of year because it was in December. I was getting ready for the winter season. I can tell you that (a) there was no WSIB that applied to the owners in those days, so you were kind of on your own financially, and (b) you still have to work. So I remember trying to learn to write with my left hand. I got a lot of cheques written that didn't look very good as I tried to write with my left hand. I just went about continuing to work.

I think that's a good point the member from Simcoe North makes about small businesses and the effect on them, where they have a couple of critical employees.

I can think of another circumstance: My father passed away on July 21, 2000. That happened to be right at the peak of our summer season at our resort, and all I can say is, thank goodness for wonderful employees. In that case, I think I took a couple of days off for my father's funeral and the preparations for that, but that's just what you do when you're in business for yourself. That is, I'm sure, the case for many thousands of small businesses around this province.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been improved dramatically since it was originally Bill 30. I think it's safe to say that the government didn't do a lot of consultation the first time around, so there are significant improvements. There's an addition of chronic and episodic illnesses. There are new types of leave. There's the family caregiver leave, which is up to eight weeks' unpaid leave. There's the critically ill child care leave, which is up to 37 weeks, and there is the crime-related child death or disappearance leave, which is up to 104 weeks-a terrible situation of that happening, where one's child dies as a result of a crime—and there is also up to 52 weeks for employees whose child disappears—another hard-toimagine scenario. Mr. Speaker, it has been improved. It also brings Ontario legislation in line with federal legislation that was passed some time ago.

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I think there are still some deficiencies, like having to take a minimum of one week, which I understand is still the case. So even if you just need a day to take a loved one to the doctor's office—and this is particularly true in a riding like Parry Sound–Muskoka, where in most cases you have to drive to either Bracebridge, Huntsville or Parry Sound to a hospital or farther afield if it's more serious, like the Royal Victoria hospital in Barrie. In many cases, there's driving involved.

Also, you don't know when this illness is going to happen. There is often no notice.

I can see I'm running out of time. I'll maybe talk about that in my two minutes, but I think flexibility is certainly needed in the way this is implemented. Perhaps, as we go through implementing and seeing it in real life, there will need to be changes made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I spoke earlier about the notion that as our aging or our senior demographic is increasing, as our population is aging, family caregiver leave will become more and more important. In fact, the idea of caring for ill family members will become more and more important. I said that we needed to have a serious conversation about what we can do as a government, as a society, to ensure that, as folks age and become ill, we are able to care for them as a society.

I also wanted to touch on the notion that many of the illnesses and the critical illnesses that people are facing these days are not acute. They're actually chronic and long-term. Many of these chronic, critical, long-term illnesses are preventable.

So while we talk about the idea of a caregiver leave to make sure that we care for these people who are these loved ones who are ill, we also need to have a serious conversation about what we can do to prevent the illness in the first place. I think our discussion needs to involve prevention. In particular, our society right now has set barriers between people and healthy living.

One of the slogans that I think is one of the most powerful in describing where we need to go with health promotion and prevention of illness is making the healthy choice the easier choice. I think we need to have a serious discussion about how we can make the healthy choices easier, because as it stands, it's easier to eat food that is not nutritious, that is packed with empty calories—sugar, salt and fat—and it's much harder to buy organic fresh fruits and produce.

In addition to this idea of having access to nutritious food, there's also a barrier to physical activity. We need to ensure that physical activity is something that can be promoted so that people don't get ill and so that less people need care when they are critically ill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I heard with interest the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton speaking about the need for us to make it easier to live a healthy lifestyle. I couldn't agree with him more. I believe that our government has done a lot in this area, whether it's encouraging people to eat Ontario-grown food, whether it's our fitness programs through the schools, the healthy kids program.

We are doing a lot, an unprecedented amount, in terms of trying to make it easier for Ontarians to live healthily.

In terms of this bill, I hear that all sides support it, so I'm just going to say, let's move on. Let's vote for it. It has had unprecedented debate: 13 hours during second reading and eight hours at third reading, for a total of 21 hours. Every side had a chance in committee to make recommendations to make this a better bill. What is left now? It has gone through committee. All the changes that could have been made or should have been made—we have all had an opportunity.

We all agree it's a good bill, so why don't we just now pass it so that Ontarians can go ahead and help their families? It makes no sense to me. So all I'm going to ask is: Let's stop talking; let's start doing. It's more

important to do than talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to get up and comment on the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. He always brings such insightful details about any legislation or about his riding. It's interesting that he talked about people in his riding who really had to go to work even though they were hurt. I talked to somebody in my riding, a local storeowner, Stephane Levac, who tore his Achilles tendon. If you went to the store the next day you found him with his leg in a shopping cart getting around because he had to work. He's the local butcher and he had no choice; he was the only employee there. So there is a lot of hardship.

The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and the barriers to healthy living—I think he has got that bang on

I'm somewhat surprised by the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville when she talks about debate on any subject, because I sat in government agencies, where she talked over and over—you know, 20 minutes and then another 20 minutes—about a report just to release a document that this government had on Metrolinx. It really made everybody wonder: What is in the document that they're so afraid to see released? "The government is so transparent": I hear that all the time from the Premier. But the transparency level we've seen over and over again, whether it be the power plants or Ornge—really, I would have to say that committee was a record. Four months for a vote just to release a document. We finally gave in to their amendments. It was just another amendment.

But I think when we talk about the need to move on, people in my riding are just afraid of what they might move on to next. We've seen a government that just killed our economy. Their Minister of Finance is saying, "Don't worry. In 20 years we're going to be back to where the rest of our competitors are." I mean, that's a scary thought when your own Minister of Finance gives that type of forecast—certainly, dark days in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I did listen intently, actually, to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I share the compliments that some of the members of this House have bestowed upon him. He always makes it personal. He tells an emotional story and how it connects to the legislation. The points, particularly for me today, are resonating around parents who are facing critically ill children, because I know of a family today that is struggling throughout this entire day with a very difficult decision, and a piece of legislation like this would ease their mind, would take that additional level of worry and would perhaps help them navigate through what is a very complex health issue.

I know that we are going to get to passing Bill 21. That is going to happen. But the member has said that at second reading we had 13 hours. Well, at second reading, that's where we debated the need for flexibility and the fact that we shouldn't tie down the one week. At second reading we talked about the need to have other signatories sign off so that people can actually get the time off. She talks about this 20 hours; quite honestly, it's the government that called the bill to this place. It is our right and our responsibility to debate it and discuss it, and that is what we are doing.

I think the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka made some excellent points. Just because a piece of legislation gets to this point in the Legislature doesn't mean that it's done. It means that we are signalling—

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's third reading. It's third reading.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know it's third reading. That's why we're here—third reading. We have a responsibility, actually, to people in our ridings and to bring those voices to this place so that they know that we still have some outstanding issues with it, even though it does a small amount. It's almost like you want to do the least amount. For the life of me, I can't understand why you've adopted this strategy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments.

I'll start with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He was talking about the fact that there is an aging demographic in ill family members. The point where I ended up in my comments was talking about the need for flexibility, that perhaps how you take one week is problematic. As an example, I just learned today that my mother went into hospital. Unfortunately, I'm here, or I'm not able to look after her, but my wife and sister, I'm sure, are checking up on her, and hopefully it's not too serious. My point is, we had no advance warning. This happened today. I'm sure that's the case with many of these situations. Having some flexibility is certainly important.

1710

Also, the members from Mississauga East-Cooksville and Bramalea-Gore-Malton were talking about the need for physical activity, and I would certainly agree with them, which is why I had a private member's bill to pave shoulders in the province, which would make it safer to cycle in the province of Ontario. That's, of course, the main reason people don't cycle on a regular basis: They're worried about their safety. This is a move to try to make it safer in more places around the province, so people can get out and take advantage of the beautiful places to ride around the province of Ontario and safely get some exercise.

I'm pleased to have had the chance to speak to this today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm happy to rise to speak to this bill again. When I last spoke to it, I think it was Bill 30, back on December 8, 2011. At that point, the government chose not to save this bill as they prorogued to go off and find a new leader of the Liberal Party. It's almost two and a half years in the working. If it was such an important bill for the government, they would have brought it back more quickly after prorogation and they would have moved it along more quickly when they introduced it the second time.

We're being chastised a little bit here for getting up and continuing to debate. In fact, just today I heard a number of important things that actually came from the various speakers, which made me want to get up and speak to this issue again. Every time somebody comes up with some comments on this bill and other bills, it leads me to more questions, perhaps, or more improvements.

The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton talked about seniors, and I think the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka did, as well. As they get into their 80s, seniors sometimes become very fragile. Much like kids, they can get sick very quickly, but they don't necessarily rebound as quickly as children do—but they can. I can use my own mother as an example. She got the flu and got severely dehydrated within 24 hours. It meant a trip to the emergency department, where she stayed for eight or 10 hours, and then needed to come home and needed to have a caregiver for a period of time. I think we're going to see more and more of those instances as people age in our families and in our communities.

Unfortunately, you don't have any advance warning. What happens if you don't have advance warning, and what if you don't need five days off? I think I spoke to this a couple of times in the House. I was happy to see the legislation change, to move from an eight-week block down to one week, but I think there still needs to be more flexibility. Maybe you only need one or two days.

I can tell you, in the years that I actually represented nurses for the Ontario Nurses' Association—this reminds me of the story of sick notes. A nurse would go off sick or a hospital worker would go off sick, and they were ready to come back to work in 24 hours or 48 hours, but because they couldn't get a sick note signed to come back to work, then they might be off for four or five days, because they weren't allowed back without having

that sick note completed. This is kind of the reverse: You have to have somebody sign off to actually make it eligible for you to be off for caregiver leave.

Somebody spoke about small businesses and the impact of this particular legislation on small business. There are many small businesses in Niagara and across this province where they maybe only have one or two employees. Certainly, that's the case when I've been out meeting with small business in my community. They might be able to tolerate one of their two employees being off for a day or two, but they may not be able to tolerate a full week. In that case, would the employee be denied the time off, or would she have to be sitting out there even though she didn't need to stay off?

The member from Beaches-East York talked about the important bills that the other parties have sitting in the queue. I can tell you, I see that list on a regular basis, and it gets longer and longer.

The member from Hamilton Mountain has the Ombudsman oversight of family and children's services. That bill has been introduced in this Legislature time and time again—still waiting for the government to bring that one forward. What can be more important than protecting children in our province?

Hon. James J. Bradley: He's very busy, that Ombudsman.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes.

The child actors bill, we talked about that, from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I'm going to be the Speaker one of these days; I almost have them all memorized. What can be more important than children actors and making sure that they're not being worked—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Overworked.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** —overworked—being required to work overtime, or not having the appropriate rest periods?

Then the member from Beaches-East York's tip-out bill is sitting. All parties have agreed to it, everybody is happy, and the amendments were all made—much like the child actors bill. But it's still sitting there. So we have all kinds of workers across this province—hundreds of thousands of restaurant and bar workers—

Mr. Michael Prue: Taxis.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —taxi drivers—who are still sharing their tips with their managers because the government hasn't brought forth that legislation. Why aren't they doing it? These are important bills as well. Instead, they keep bringing the same bills time and time again.

I'll go to the example of enforcement. That is going to be a huge issue with this legislation. It's a huge issue already under the Employment Standards Act. I'll use the example of time off to vote in a provincial election or in a federal election. I think, provincially, you have to have three consecutive hours off to vote during the election period, and federally maybe it's four hours, or vice versa.

You don't know how many grievances I filed in 20 years for nurses because there is no enforcement of that legislation. We would tell the employer up front, "Yes, these people work 12-hour shifts. They need to have

three hours or four hours off work so that they can actually go and exercise their democratic right to vote." Lo and behold, it wasn't enforced, they wouldn't be given the time off, there would be a big fight, an argument, and we'd file grievances—more cost to the taxpayer in the system.

We also talked about ill children. I think the member from the Kitchener–Waterloo actually talked about that. I know in my own riding, I am dealing in my constituency office with a mother who has a child with a chronic leukemia. She's spending days after days at McMaster in Hamilton with her child. She hasn't been able to go to work, but she doesn't get paid if she doesn't go to work, so this bill is not going to help her one iota. They're struggling with their bills, and they're struggling with their mortgage payments. So although this bill will give some opportunity to some people who have the ability to take some time off because, financially, they're able to, many people will not be able to.

Enforcement is such a huge issue under the Employment Standards Act in many other areas. I don't know whether anybody ever read the booklet that came out a while back from the Workers Action Centre. They actually had surveyed workers across the province, and so many of them reported that they never even got their severance pay. I think it was something like 43% of people who either were terminated from a job, or the business closed down, who didn't get their severance pay, and there was no enforcement around that issue. At the time, I think the Liberal government had actually cut about \$6 million out of enforcement, so clearly, there aren't enough enforcement officers here in the province to deal with the current legislation that is in place. I don't know how they're actually going to deal with this kind of diverse population with so many businesses here in the province.

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I think that the last piece I want to speak to is the fact that in my community, there was a business called Vertis. It was in Stevensville, actually, which is part of the Niagara Falls riding, which the member from Niagara Falls now represents.

Vertis was there for about 40 years. It was owned by a US company, and they went bankrupt. These workers—100 in the factory, I think, and another 30 in the office—found themselves out of work. Today, they still have not received their severance pay. There is no legislation to protect them. The company actually filed for bankruptcy in the US.

They're not entitled to the workers' employment protection program federally. The provincial government has done nothing to assist them. The federal government has done nothing to assist them. They're owed \$3.2 million. There is no enforcement around issues such as that, either.

I can't see the clock. Is it—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Fifteen seconds.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Okay, I have 15 seconds left.

Although, yes, the bill is important and, yes, all parties are likely going to support it, I think that we need to continue to highlight the areas where legislation is actually lacking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm happy to speak on Bill 21, Leaves to Help Families. This bill is simply about compassion, and it's a very important piece of legislation. This bill helps Ontarians who have a family member with a serious medical condition and who are missing out on the time they need to be with their loved ones. This bill helps families with critically ill children, so that they are not forced to choose between work and care. This bill is also about those families whose children were murdered or have gone missing and who are forced to endure their pain while they are at their desks.

I don't understand why the opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 21. This bill has now been debated for 13 hours during second reading and eight hours at third reading, for a total of 21 hours. Over 72 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments.

This bill is a very important piece of legislation. It's about time that we pass this legislation. I'm calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us pass this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always like to listen to the member from Welland because she brings a very practical attitude towards it, and I think she speaks quite genuinely and sincerely. I like, more poignantly, the story she told of the mother who is having to take time off, unpaid, to look after her child with leukemia.

It just shows that this bill is—when you look at what is being done federally, as was mentioned by the previous person commenting for two minutes, the federal government has family medical leave, except it did not include the provision of a significant risk of death in a 26-week period. They also have job-protected leave for up to 37 weeks. In both cases, those are unpaid leaves.

It's important to note that the government means well, that the job would be protected, but if you have no income, as the member from Welland said, you're exposed to a lot of risk. A family that is already suffering the stress of a child, in the example that was used there—but often, that's very much the case. The family is disrupted; the family is stressed. Nothing in this bill is going to look to the whole fairness of replacing the income unless they have a benevolent employer. The federal government has stepped in to strengthen the employment insurance provision, and that is what is being mimicked here in Bill 21.

I endorse her comments. We support the bill. It has been amended. But to suggest for a moment how many hours we have or haven't spoken to it—we want to be on the record. Compassion isn't owned by the Liberal

government. You should know that. We want to put the real stories of human tragedies from our ridings on the record. Please give us that opportunity, if you don't listen to any other thing we say.

Thank you for the opportunity here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I always enjoy listening to the member from Welland. She brings a great wealth of knowledge, from her background as a registered nurse and being involved in the workforce and fighting for workers' rights, in her expertise.

One of the things I find passing strange is that, of course, this bill was brought to the Legislature last fall. When the Liberal government prorogued for their leadership race it dropped off the order paper, and now

it's back again.

We talked about the block of time off that the original bill had, that we're forcing workers to take a week at a time, or more than the time that may be required. What I question is why is it that, if the government actually talked to businesses and small businesses and stakeholders, they wouldn't have brought that concern forward, because I know during the committee period that they certainly did. They brought that concern forward especially small businesses—that they would rather have a flexible amount of time off for their employees, so that it wouldn't impact the small business with an absentee employee for extended periods of time. We know that when someone is ill, it's unpredictable, so that absence could be something that's unpredictable and needed right away, and therefore perhaps the employer can't plan; whereas, if staff are taking vacation time, usually they give some notice and that gap can be filled and the employer can prepare.

It's just kind of passing strange that when the bill was originally presented why that flexibility wasn't in that

bill before.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I've been sitting here listening to this debate on and off this afternoon. I must admit that there are days when I sit here and I feel a little bit like Alice in Wonderland.

I think everybody's acknowledged that we've had second reading already, that that took 13 hours, and that's fine; that it then went to committee and we had whatever amendments the three parties—or two out of the three, as the case may be—could agree on at committee. Now it's come back for third reading.

The thing I find really, really strange, Speaker—because, Speaker, you know the rules around here—is that it has already been amended. The bill says what it says. We either pass it the way it is or we don't pass it the way it is. But what I keep hearing over and over and over again is, "Well, you should change this, or you should change that, or you should change something else." The truth of the matter is, it's already been to committee, and committee is where we change things. There's actually

no opportunity at third reading to change the bill. It is—you vote for it—or it isn't—you don't vote for it.

We've spent eight hours talking about something none of us has the capacity to change. So we've had 21 hours of debate in this place, and what I find really strange is that the objection I just heard from over there was: "Why do we keep calling the same bill? Why don't we move on with some other bills that the NDP care about?" Well, because we haven't passed this one. If we pass this one, we can move on to another bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Welland.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** I want to thank the members from Mississauga–Brampton South, Durham, London–Fanshawe and Guelph.

The member from Beaches-East York says he remembers that song, "Go Ask Alice"—the member from Guelph said she felt like Alice in Wonderland, but he said it reminded him of the White Rabbit song, "Go Ask Alice."

I know there is no further opportunity to amend the bill, but certainly there's an opportunity to raise red flags here as part of the debate. That's what I intended to do. 1730

I guess the biggest question for me is, how is this legislation actually going to be implemented, how is it going to be monitored and how is it going to be enforced? There are many part-time people working in minimum wage jobs in precarious employment here in this province who won't be able to take advantage of this particular legislation.

The Liberal government needs to be on the case of the federal government to try to get some payment in place for this legislation, like other pieces of leaves of absence under the Employment Standards Act. Frankly, the government could have called this bill for third reading as early as November 18 of last year but chose not to do that.

The ESA piece, I think, is very important, because we've heard from many workers in this province that there are overtime violations. There are unpaid wages. There are severance pay obligations and there are vacation pay obligations that currently the government is not enforcing. It isn't 2% or 3%; it is sometimes 73% of the people who reported to the survey who are saying they didn't get their vacation pay or they didn't get their severance pay.

I was happy to participate in the debate. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus and my constituents to speak on this important bill this afternoon. Our party supports this bill and has been on record for quite some time indicating our support, as well as our leader, Tim Hudak.

At the heart of this bill is the desire to allow Ontario's caregivers to focus on what matters most—the health and

well-being of their loved ones—without having to fear losing their jobs.

As we continue with the third reading debate, I would like to thank all of my fellow colleagues in the Legislature for their thoughtful comments and for bringing up further issues for discussion. I've had the pleasure of speaking to this bill at a couple of different readings. Addressing this issue is one I feel strongly about.

Mr. Speaker, this bill talks about some of the most difficult and traumatic experiences a family or individual could be faced with, and it talks a great deal about the ability of government and opposition parties to show compassion and to understand these situations.

While there is no question we support the intent of the bill, we'd also like to indicate that it is a shame that there is financial devastation that occurs sometimes because of these situations, and that hasn't been addressed in this legislation and probably couldn't be.

Having said that, it's a step in the right direction towards helping families out in times of most critical need. This debate shouldn't be about whether an individual or family should take a leave—often, in many cases, it is needed—but rather we need to focus on how we can help them in creating options for how they can be there for their loved ones without fear of losing their employment.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 21 would not incur any additional cost provincially. It would just protect the job of the individual from being terminated. Of course, we're interested in putting families first. I think we all know families, or have had family members, who have faced personal health issues and can certainly understand why this bill is important.

I can speak personally. I know that my wife's father for a number of years was critically ill in hospital in London. She took time off. She had a full-time job at the time, and she took vacation time and unpaid time. She felt it was important and it was her place to be with him, at that time and with her mother, of course. Like she has said, she has never regretted that time that she spent there with him. It's time you never get back.

She was fortunate. She had an employer that would allow her the time, and she used up all of her options.

Everyone can relate to these issues, and we all have, at one point in our lives, as I say, known someone close who has gone through this. We don't want to face these things, but we do need to get through them. We've got to make sure that we do what we do to get families through, help them in these difficult times and show the understanding and compassion they deserve.

After much careful consideration and amendments that have been debated, I believe that this bill has gone through a good deal of discussion in committee. It's great to see the support for the bill from a variety of different groups. If I have time, I'll read some letters into the record. The addition of chronic and episodic illnesses—it's probably in the majority of cases that we can think of many examples where this is a common issue with our families.

The bill demonstrates the opportunity and need for collaboration across party lines. Our PC caucus is glad to see that the government, the Liberal Party, is listening to the concerns we have as a party, and also the third party, represented under the former Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

My fellow colleagues enjoyed the opportunity to speak to that bill and, at that point, outlined a number of concerns our caucus had with the legislation. The original bill did not demonstrate proper consultation with stakeholders, or with the small business community, in particular. It failed to demonstrate that there was a real need for these changes to be implemented.

In Ontario, there are currently only two forms of leave available to workers who are protected under the Employment Standards Act: the family medical leave and the personal emergency leave. Under the current federal Employment Insurance Act, six weeks of employment insurance benefits may be paid to eligible employees under this leave.

The family medical leave is an unpaid job-protected leave of up to eight weeks within a 26-week period. In order to be eligible, a qualified health practitioner must issue a certificate stating that an individual who is to be cared for has a serious medical condition and has a significant risk of death occurring within a period of up to 26 weeks.

The personal emergency leave gives some employees the right to take up to 10 days of unpaid job-protected leave each year due to injuries, illness and certain other emergencies or urgent matters. This type of leave would only be eligible for individuals who work for a company that regularly employs more than 50 employees.

Bill 21 includes the introduction of new types of leave: the family caregiver leave for up to eight weeks, unpaid, per year; the critically ill child care leave for up to 37 weeks for parents caring for a critically ill child; and a crime-related death or disappearance leave of up to 104 weeks for employees whose child died as a result of this situation. The family caregiver leave mirrors the family medical leave in many ways; however, it does not include the provision of significant risk of death within that 26-week period.

It's important that this bill brings Ontario's legislation in line with federal legislation that was passed some time ago. I believe some of those concerns regarding the fairly restrictive time frames were addressed in committee to allow for more flexibility. As we have said before, all family members know of someone who has gone through a situation like this.

This bill also speaks to the compassion that members of this Legislature on all three sides have for people we represent. Honestly, I think there's not a person here who wouldn't agree with that kind of initiative or wouldn't agree with this plan. When a person has an ill child or family member, we all think of them. We can sympathize with the stress that they are under. Any child, we hope, is going to live a happy and healthy life, but that is not always the case. In these circumstances, it is important

for all of us to show that type of compassion and understanding when confronted with these types of situations. It's good to see that we are giving more respect for family members who unselfishly give of their time to care for that family member, and we are working to provide a level of support for them to do so. A streamlined piece of legislation is something that we can support.

With my riding of Sarnia-Lambton being largely rural with a small urban mix, I can certainly see this type of

legislation would have a lot of support.

Additionally, when dealing with the loss or disappearance of a child, it's time that it finally is recognized. During this heartbreaking period of time for any parent who might end up in this situation, providing them time is not only compassionate, but it's just the right thing to do.

I shortened this speech up; it was a little longer.

We'd like to see this bill through. There are some important things in this legislation that actually eliminate inconsistencies between the federal labour code and provincial labour laws, and we'd like to see that changed instead of creating more inconsistencies.

Everyone's goal is the same. Many in this room, in this legislative chamber, have elderly family members at home, and we need flexibility ourselves to be able to keep them at home because that is where they want to be. They're at their happiest there and it's in our best interest if we can keep those loved ones in good health and in those types of situations they already lead.

This bill really comes down to fairness, because it's fairness for those families who have children or families or loved ones for that matter who may be ill. We need to

be compassionate and realize that today.

The most important thing we should do in Ontario, and I think all members would agree with this, is to create that type of environment where there are jobs for young people and jobs for people who are in transition in those situations, who could be faced with these types of situations.

I know this bill has been debated a lot. We've dealt with many different situations. Many of our different ridings have these situations, but I think at the heart of them, they're all the same. It's about people going through these situations that are unforeseen and certainly tragic sometimes. We need to be able to do everything we can do to help people deal with those. I think most members would agree an initiative like this works well and it's not going to be harmful.

1740

I'm very pleased that we've had an opportunity to debate this bill as much as we have. I think it has given members an opportunity to bring up issues from their own ridings, and personal experiences as well. I think this bill has been vastly improved by the amendments that members from all three parties brought to the table at committee, the suggestions my fellow members have brought forward. The committee has certainly examined this piece of legislation, and we're able to be proud of

what we're accomplishing in this session of the Legislature.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus support the bill. Compassion is not something unique to any one party here. I strongly believe that each of us in this room and in this chamber is in support of helping those in our society and within our community. There shouldn't be any doubt about it. It's all about how we go about doing it and implementing public policies to address those situations that we all face.

While we need to have a government in this province that is committed to managing costs and recognizing there are savings that can be realized, we also need a compassionate government and one that can work through issues of health care and providing those types of services. That's why I think at the end of the day we can come together as legislators and pass this bill.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity today to speak to this bill. I thank my colleagues for their

consideration

In closing, I would urge the government to consider moving forward on the issues that are really important to the people of Ontario, and that's creating winning conditions for the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Sarnia-Lambton for his presentation this afternoon.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I want to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his thoughtful comments, and I want to add my voice again to this debate.

Earlier, my comments had talked about how one of the questions that we need to answer is: How are we going to address the fact that, as a growing demographic, elders and seniors are going to become more and more in need of care, that there will be a growing population of folks that may be ill, and that, as both a family unit and as a broader society, we need to answer the question of how we are going to care for those people as that demographic gets much larger?

The second component of my comments was the fact that not only do we need to be concerned about caring for those who are our loved ones or members of our family who are ill and critically ill; we also need to look at and have a serious discussion around what we can do to prevent the illness in the first place. That requires us to

encourage prevention and health promotion.

The final component I want to wrap up my comments with is with respect to the actual way that this bill can be enforced. Without proper enforcement, any legislation is rendered meaningless. You can have the strongest piece of legislation with the most powerful protections in place, but if there's no enforcement of those protections, if there's no enforcement of that legislation, then it's rendered absolutely meaningless. So I implore the government to reconsider the Ministry of Labour's position and ability to actually enforce this legislation.

For too long, we've seen many labour-related laws and employment law matters that are simply not being upheld to a level that provides the right type of protection to people in Ontario. So I think we need to really focus on enforcement if we want to make sure that this bill actually will benefit people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, thank you, Speaker. Every day this bill is stalled, we are preventing people from taking the time off to care for their loved ones. It's as simple as that. We've had 13 hours of debate during second reading. We've had eight hours of debate at third

second reading. We've had eight hours of debate at third reading. At 21 hours, I am speaker number 75 on this issue, and you know what? We're all saying the same thing: Let's get this bill passed. Stop stalling and pass the

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Leeds–Grenville.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks very much, Speaker. It's a great opportunity for me. I don't have any questions for the member, but I do have a few comments.

You know, the member has been here now for about seven years. I had the pleasure of being his seatmate for a period of time. I really think that the government should have engaged the member for Sarnia-Lambton when they tabled this bill with their strategy, because he is a success story in this Legislature. In his short period of time here, he has been able to get a couple of bills passed. I know that his Ontario One Call bill, which he co-sponsored with the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller, was passed; and also, the bill that I remember, being his seatmate—he had a number of petitions—which was a 25% tax credit for farmers that donated excess produce to local food banks. I think it's a great tribute to this member that he was able to get that added to the Local Food Act by the Premier, who is also the Minister of Agricultural and Food, using a friendly amendment. I think he has demonstrated over and over and over again, since he was first elected to this chamber, his ability to work with people. So I took his comments on Bill 21 to heart. I appreciated his efforts regarding this bill.

I know that the minister expressed a bit of frustration about it not being passed. Again, when we had the opportunity to clear the decks, her Premier didn't put that on the list of priorities. That was back in September. So I think there was ample opportunity for the government to work out a deal; I think now they're scrambling. I don't think they're managing the minority as best as they could.

I want to congratulate, again, the member for Sarnia–Lambton. I appreciate his comments. He's a great MPP, and I hope he'll be here for a long, long time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to contribute to this debate again because it really is important. There are people out in the audience watching. The member from Davenport actually sent us a little email that he and his new baby, Hope, are watching the Legislature. He's promoting education early, which I know that the member from Davenport certainly would be doing; that doesn't surprise me.

Here's a very good example: The member from the Davenport currently is watching us, and he's probably being informed on this bill on third reading, some of the amendments that we made, because he's not here right now to give a voice to this debate. So as he's listening, and many other people from London–Fanshawe, the constituents, are listening, it's important that we discuss this bill in third reading. Otherwise, why have a third reading? Why has the Legislative Assembly ever designed a third reading if we're not able to contribute to that process once it has gone to committee?

I mentioned this earlier, and it's kind of interesting because one of the things that we brought right into second reading debate was the fact that the time period was to be taken in blocks. If this bill was originally produced, and you talked to stakeholders, I would have thought that would be something that businesses would have brought right to the forefront of their concerns. When an employee is off work unexpectedly for the illness of a family member for a week or longer, that sometimes really disadvantages small businesses. So that was kind of a strange thing.

I was talking to my colleague there and saying, "Some of this stuff that we amended in committee: Gosh, that could have been done when the bill was presented, and maybe the process would have been a little quicker, and we could have been voting on this bill and passing it for those people who need it."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member from Sarnia-Lambton for his reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to address the members who took the time to make such kind comments: the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the Minister of Health, my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, and the member from London–Fanshawe.

Thank you for those kind words to the member from Leeds-Grenville, as well. Yes, we did have some success on a number of private members' bills, and if the government would have chosen to include me in some of these things, I would work with them. I would certainly help them get their legislation passed.

As I was sitting here thinking about the remarks I would make, I wanted to give a shout-out to a local hospice in my riding: St. Joe's Hospice in Sarnia–Lambton. It certainly does a wonderful job. It's a place where a number of people have to go. They have hundreds of volunteers who work there; they do a lot of fundraising in the local community to keep the hospice going. That's how it's funded. Hundreds of people donate hours there as people come to the close of life. They spend hours there, and they do a wonderful job.

I know there are a number of those institutions and types of facilities across the province. I want to give a shout-out to all those people who work there and the volunteers who keep them working. It's certainly compassionate work. It's the kind of work that needs to be done. Unfortunately, people are faced with these types of situations. It's nice to know that there's a wonderful facility like this in my riding. I wish all of the ridings in Ontario had it. I know they didn't have facilities like that; I wish they did. I know from talking with some of my own members that they've had to go through situations like that as well.

Anyway, it has been a pleasure to rise and speak to this debate. I think the debate has been fulsome, and I think it has been worthwhile, because people have gotten a chance to stand up and talk about the issues in their own ridings and in their own personal lives. I think we can always learn something from that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's always an honour to be able to rise in the House. It's one of the privileges of being a member of the Legislature to be able to rise in this House to speak. When a member wants to take that opportunity, I feel everybody should be able to have that.

Specific to today, I'm speaking on Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crimerelated child death or disappearance leaves of absence. It's a very serious issue. I think I've heard from all sides that's an issue. Obviously, since this is at third reading, it's an issue that we are all planning to proceed with.

One of the reasons why it's important to fully debate an issue: It's also so that members themselves can fully understand the issue. As I was watching the debate today in my office—I had a few meetings, wrote some notes, did some research—I heard some really interesting comments, and I as a legislator learned.

So I hear many of the members across the way saying, "We have to move this bill." You know what? They have a point. I hope that in their caucus meetings before the government prorogued, they were making the same point on these bills, because that killed not only bills like this but many other bills. That's an issue.

I expect they did. I expect they had the same kinds of arguments. But obviously, moving forward bills like this—I heard one member say, "Well, if we did this today, we could help people today," and that's true. But if you hadn't prorogued, think of all the people we could have helped.

The decision was made to prorogue the government for many other reasons, including a leadership campaign, but several other reasons. Those reasons took precedence over the people who were going to be helped by this bill. So I am somewhat offended when members across the way say that I as a member or that my colleagues or the people in the official opposition—

Mr. Bill Walker: Colleagues.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, they're my colleagues—that we are wasting time. We're not wasting time.

Also, people watching at home—and there are people watching at home, both stakeholders and others—are also learning things, how things actually work here.

Something else as I was doing my research on this bill this afternoon, because I wasn't planning to speak today, but as I was listening to the people across the way, I believe the member from Guelph said, "We can't make any changes anymore, so why are we debating this?" The member from London–Fanshawe said, "That is the same with every bill in third reading," and obviously, it has been the custom of the Legislature to do this, and there's obviously a reason for it. The reason is so more people gain a full understanding of the bill: what it's going to do, what it's not going to do and how it could be improved in the future. The title of this law is the Employment Standards Act, 2000. I'm assuming that's when the act was first enacted. If lawmakers were perfect, we wouldn't have to be amending it now.

Even as we are debating this bill in third reading, we could be laying the groundwork, and people out there could be thinking, "This is one small step. What could the next step be?" Making laws isn't one size fits all and, "Let's get it done today." Being involved in this process is a continual process, and if it wasn't, then we wouldn't need to amend acts.

My colleague from London–Fanshawe brought up a few really good points, and some of them I'd like to add to. I remember that when this act was first brought forward, one of the issues was that to take leave, it had to be a week. You had to take a week-long leave. Quite frankly, that didn't make sense from day one. Who did they consult with on that? The idea that you would propose a week—I believe that when I spoke on second reading, like in the case of my mom—my mom needs someone for two hours, once a week. I'm sure there are lots of people like that. You could take an afternoon a week, as opposed to taking a week.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: A waste of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. John Vanthof: Again, I am being heckled by the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville that this is a waste of taxpayers' dollars. I'd like to get this on the record: Trying to get legislation correct and taking the time to do it in the venue where it's supposed to be done is a waste of taxpayers' dollars, but proroguing a government and spending a billion dollars on moving a gas plant for four or five seats is not a waste of taxpayer dollars. I don't like to be heckled on wasting taxpayers' dollars by the people across the way.

On another issue with this bill: There were some changes made for taking leave for people who have children with serious illnesses or people who have children who have disappeared, and that one really hit home for me because in my riding we had a young lady disappear probably a decade ago—Melanie Ethier. There are still transport trucks with Melanie's picture on it, and if you have information that could help find out what happened to Melanie—and this is another chance to do that. If anyone has information that they could bring forward to help the police find out what happened to Melanie, it's still an ongoing investigation.

This is a good amendment to give parents or family members of a disappeared child a year. But when your child disappears, like for the Ethier family, it's a lot longer than a year. In our riding, especially in the Timiskaming Shores area, it was a life-changing experience for us all, because we come from a small town. Things like that shouldn't happen anywhere, but no one thinks of it happening in small-town northern Ontario. That has left a scar on our riding, but it has left a huge break in the Ethier family. If there's anything that we can do to further help them find out what happened to their child, it's time and money well spent.

As legislators, anything that we can do to help our constituents—we are making laws here; we're not playing games—

Mr. Bill Walker: Some of us are.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I don't think any of us work hard to get elected to play games. We work hard to get elected to make people's lives better. We're fortunate in this Legislature. I know most of my fellow legislators a

bit, and we all come from different backgrounds. We come from different places in the province, we come from radically different backgrounds, a lot of us, and that adds to this Legislature.

The fact that we all have the ability to speak on issues adds to the depth of our knowledge to make laws, both ones in the present and ones in the future. I'm very proud to have the ability to stand here and remind people about Melanie, remind people that this is an important issue, but also that it's important that the people they elect have the ability to speak on behalf of their riding.

Thank you, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	
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Cálinas Eranas (MDD)	Minled Dalt	

Nickel Belt

Gélinas, France (NDP)

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

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Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House /
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		Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Timotor of Finance / Timote des Finances
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	0 0	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
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		intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement
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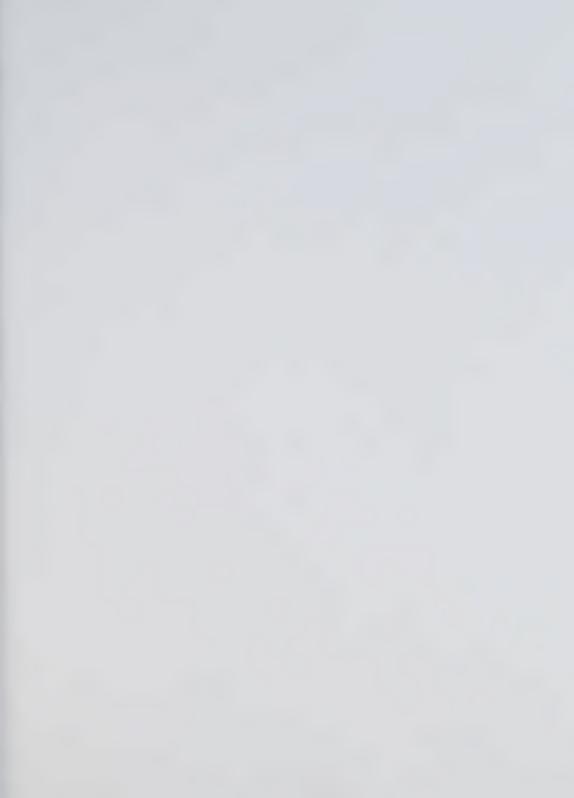
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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor

Soo Wong

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day







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No. 125

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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 8 April 2014

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 8 avril 2014



Speaker Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière Deborah Deller

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### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 April 2014

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISSANTES

Mr. Orazietti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 167, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to move second reading of Bill 167, the Invasive Species Act. Speaker, I'm going to take a few minutes to outline the benefits of this legislation, the importance of this legislation and why we need to move expeditiously on this.

Ontario's natural resources provide a significant source of jobs and economic benefits for our province. They are one of the foundations of our prosperity and they are fundamental to our quality of life. That is why we must take stronger action to address threats to our environment and to our economy. Our government must show leadership on this issue, and with this legislation that is exactly what we're doing. The proposed act builds on concerted and coordinated action we have been taking on invasive species.

In 2012, our ministry worked with the Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Environment and Transportation to develop the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan. One of the actions in that plan was to identify legislative and policy obstacles to effective prevention, rapid response and management. Last summer, my ministry issued a discussion paper that identified gaps in different pieces of legislation that address invasive species. Those gaps are not surprising, considering that Ontario currently uses a patchwork of more than 20 different pieces of legislation—provincial and federal acts—to respond to the threat of invasive species. Those gaps are not surprising, and that is why we need to move forward with this legislation.

If passed, the Invasive Species Act would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada. But we would not be acting alone, Speaker, it's important to note. Managing invasive species has always been a shared responsibility—across all levels of government as well as with industry, environmental groups and the public. Ontario would continue to collaborate with all those involved in invasive species management, including municipalities, key stakeholders from across the province, and the federal government, which has an important national role in invasive species management.

Traditionally, it has been the federal government's job to prevent invasives from entering Canada, and once established, it's been the provincial government's responsibility to eradicate or detect these species. We need to do more in a coordinated way. The Invasive Species Act would, if passed, complement the role of the federal government in managing invasive species. It would promote shared accountability for managing invasive species by enabling the expansion of strategic partnerships.

Our government has built many enduring partnerships in this area. For example, Ontario is a member of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, where we work with the Great Lakes states and the US and Canadian governments to prevent aquatic invasives such as Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes. We've been working with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for more than two decades to deliver the Invading Species Awareness Program. More recently, we supported the creation of the Invasive Species Centre, in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, to collaborate on research, strategic planning, communications and outreach, response actions, mitigation plans and rehabilitation activities. To date, Ontario has invested nearly \$9 million toward the establishment of this centre in partnership with the federal government.

Bill 167 would support actions that are stronger, more focused and more effective. We need to act so that the future generations of this province will continue to benefit from Ontario's rich natural legacy.

Ontario's unique geography and diverse trade links put us at greater risk than many other provinces. More invasive species have become established in Ontario than in any other Canadian jurisdiction. The reality is that we are a strong trading province, globally connected to the economy. Our Great Lakes are a vast and shared resource, connected by rivers and streams to broad portions of North America.

Speaker, when it comes to invasive species, the risks are not diminishing. Climate change, as well as industrial and urban developments, are stressing ecosystems, making them more susceptible to threats from invasive species.

So here's how the legislation will assist us: The bill before the Legislature would provide the province with the tools to step up the effort to prevent, control, monitor and eradicate invasive species. This landmark legislation would, if passed, help by providing the powers to intervene early so invasive species do not become established. This legislation would give Ontario the tools to ban activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species. It would also allow the government to enable rapid response actions to stop an invasive species from spreading. The legislation would, when needed, help ensure compliance through modernized inspection and enforcement measures. The proposed legislation uses a risk-based approach that considers a full range of threats, costs and benefits to the environment, society and the economy.

A broad range of stakeholders have expressed strong support for further action to address invasive species. These stakeholders, from municipalities and conservation groups to industry, recognize the need for stronger action to manage this threat to Ontario's economy and natural environment.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is the largest conservation organization in the province. They represent outdoor recreation enthusiasts who would be dramatically impacted by invasive species. The federation's executive director, Angelo Lombardo, has said this: "This is a positive step in the fight against invasive species that will compliment actions already taken by the federal government." This is a serious threat to Ontario. "The legislation being introduced by the province will provide the minister with the tools to immediately react when a new species is identified, or when a threat is identified."

Conservation Ontario represents a network of 36 conservation authorities which are dedicated to conserving, restoring and managing Ontario's natural resources. Kim Gavine, general manager of Conservation Ontario called the proposed Invasive Species Act "an important step in improving Ontario's response to invasive species." She believes that the risk-based approach we have taken "is a sound and useful approach that allows for prioritization of actions to maximize the use of limited resources."

The head of biodiversity for the Royal Ontario Museum has also weighed in. Dave Ireland, managing director, says the proposed Invasive Species Act "is unprecedented in Canada, and is a bold step by the province."

Invasive species are a very real threat. I know that my colleagues in the House from across the province have become familiar with problems of invasive species in their own ridings and in their own communities. Zebra mussels are a menace to the municipal water systems in this province, clogging intake pipes and costing the province between \$75 million and \$91 million each year to manage. Phragmites, the European common reed, is damaging beaches. Insects, such as the Asian long-horned beetle, threaten the health of our forests.

#### 0910

And then there is the threat of species not yet established in Ontario. Northern Ontario, where the \$11.9-

billion forestry industry supports over 55,000 jobs, faces the risk of invasive pests such as the mountain pine beetle. This beetle has killed about half the total volume of commercial lodgepole pine in British Columbia and has moved east to Alberta, where it is also affecting jack pine. It's now within 50 kilometres of the Saskatchewan border and continues to move further east. In fact, in the province of British Columbia, the government has spent \$917 million fighting one particular invasive species that's a serious threat to their economy.

Asian carp also pose a serious threat. These invasive fish have overwhelmed some rivers in the United States, where they now make up more than 95% of the fish by weight in some areas. Fishing contributes about \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy and attracts tourists from around the world. Asian carp could devastate our commercial fishing industry. It could cost tourism jobs related to the recreational fishing industry in this province. Asian carp are dangerously close to Ontario's borders already; at least, they've been found in one American tributary of Lake Erie.

Invasive species are a quality-of-life issue. Fishing and hunting are fundamental to the traditions of First Nations. For many young people across the province, catching their first fish or taking a swim in a lake or hiking in the outdoors is part of a healthy, active Ontario childhood. Ontarians from all walks of life value our natural environment whether they are camping in a provincial park or taking a walk in their local park.

It's important to understand that invasive species impact all Ontarians, wherever they live. They are a threat to the beauty of our natural areas and to all of our communities, including urban centres. Let me provide a couple of examples. The Asian long-horned beetle attacks hardwood trees including all species of our iconic Canadian maple tree. The emerald ash borer, if not effectively controlled, is expected to spread across the entire range of ash causing widespread tree mortality. In fact, in the city of Toronto, they've spent \$37 million removing and replacing ash trees. This is particularly concerning when you consider that the green ash is one of the most commonly planted species in our urban forests.

Invasive species that impact the natural environment can also pose public safety issues. The water chestnut is an aquatic invasive plant that floats on the surface of the water. It forms dense clusters with sharp barbs. It threatens native species and makes swimming and boating very difficult. The giant hogweed is an invasive plant that has become established in parts of Ontario. Its sap can burn your skin, causing blistering and scarring.

Invasive species are a threat to our biodiversity and are the second leading cause of species becoming at risk. Once invasive species are introduced into the wild with no natural predators, they can spread quickly. Invasive species often out-compete domestic species for food. They can destroy native species' habitats and, according to a 2010 report on the state of Ontario's biodiversity, invasive species are the second-greatest threat to species at risk in Ontario. They are a leading cause of extinction of species globally.

Here are a couple more examples: Invasive phragmites release toxins from their roots into the soil and hinder the growth of, and kill, surrounding plants. They crowd out native vegetation, thus resulting in decreased plant biodiversity. These tall, densely growing weeds can reach up to five metres in height, degrade the habitat and decrease food supplies for native wildlife, including several species at risk.

To provide another example, the invasive dogstrangling vine impacts the reproduction of the monarch butterfly, which is a species at risk. The butterflies lay their eggs on the plant but the larvae are unable to complete their life cycle and can't survive.

Here's how the legislation would work and why it's important that we move forward with this: The proposed legislation would accelerate the actions we can take in combating invasive species. We know that to manage invasive species effectively, we must find them early and respond quickly. That is also the most cost-effective approach. Finding new invasive species before they approach widely or become established allows us to try to eliminate populations as soon as possible. If it's not possible to eliminate the invaders, early response could also help to control species and reduce costs.

Let me provide a few details of how the proposed legislation would work to combat invasive species. It would allow the government to make regulations to list invasive species and carriers of invasive species that pose a threat. Listed invasive species would be categorized as being either a moderate threat or a significant threat to the natural environment in Ontario. Importing, releasing, possessing, transporting and other actions involving an invasive species could then be banned.

Here are a couple more examples. If a supply of wood were found to be infested with an invasive beetle, we could prevent it from being moved from one part of the province to another to minimize the impact and, obviously, reduce costs. Or Ontario could allow only Asian carp that were already eviscerated into the province.

Of course, the proposed act also recognizes that there may be legitimate reasons for possessing an invasive species, such as for the purposes of research and education. The act would obviously create these exemptions.

With respect to the regulations, Speaker, I want to be clear that no invasive species are listed in Bill 167. The proposed act would enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations to list invasive species and carriers of invasive species that would be subject to the act.

If the act is passed, extensive public consultation would occur before any species would be listed in the regulations. Consultation would include posting proposed regulatory conditions and associated information on the Environmental and Regulatory Registries for the public and stakeholders to review and comment on. Any proposed regulations or rules regarding any invasive species would be based on risk assessments that consider environmental, social and economic impacts. Stakeholders, including industry, would have an opportunity to review

and comment on any proposed regulations or rules before they were created or enforced.

Speaker, early detection of invasive species is also key to managing them effectively. The proposed act, if passed, would strengthen inspection activity to protect Ontario from invasive species. Here is a little more information on that: We know that enforcement measures strengthen protection. In 2005, Ontario put rules in place banning the transport and possession of several live invasive fish species, including the four species of Asian carp. Since then, enforcement officers have seized more than 40,000 pounds of Asian carp that were destined for Ontario markets.

Bill 167 includes provisions for allowing strong penalties and enforcement powers to investigate violations. If a high-risk species such as Asian carp were found in Ontario, the proposed legislation would enable rapid response actions such as working with partners on control and eradication efforts. The provisions would also ensure that those responsible are accountable for the costs of control and eradication through strong penalties and cost recovery mechanisms which are important features of this legislation.

Penalties are essential to ensuring effective implementation of any act. In the proposed Invasive Species Act, there would be maximum fines possible of up to \$250,000 for individuals plus imprisonment for up to one year. Maximum fines for corporations could be as high as \$1 million. These penalties are aimed at providing adequate deterrence to potential violators. The fines may multiply in the case of multiple specimens or species, and they may be increased by the amount of monetary benefit resulting from the offence.

In addition to these penalties, upon conviction, a court may also make additional orders as it saw fit. These can include orders to remedy the harm to the natural environment that resulted from the offence.

I'd like to share the comments of a couple of stake-holders with regard to this legislation. The first is from Dilhari Fernando, who is the executive director of the Invasive Species Centre. She said, "Ontario is showing tremendous leadership with this new legislation, and is the only jurisdiction in Canada to propose such a comprehensive package of tools to proactively address invasive species. Invasive species threaten Ontario's environment by altering natural spaces and endangering the species that are native to our regions. Imagine an Ontario where fall colours are a thing of the past or where we can no longer take our families canoeing or fishing in our lakes and rivers. This could be our reality if we don't act to address the threats posed by invasive species."

0920

The second comment is from Owen Williams, president of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council. He calls our proposed tools in the Invasive Species Act "essential for responding to the growing threat of invasives."

We appreciate the support of partners such as the Invasive Species Centre and the Ontario Invasive Plant Council. As I said earlier, managing invasive species is a

shared responsibility—shared with other governments, industry, environmental groups and of course the public. In fact, everyone can play a role in protecting Ontario's biodiversity by planting non-invasive species in gardens, by never releasing bait or any wildlife into nature, by cleaning their boats before removing them and placing them in other water bodies, and by not transporting firewood. They're simple things that perhaps we overlook, but they're important in helping to reduce the impact of invasive species—and spread, of course. We need to engage all Ontarians to do their part to protect species and habitat, and we need to take a leadership role with this proposed legislation.

In closing, Speaker, I'd like to be clear: Invasive species impact the lives of every Ontarian. You don't have to be an angler or a forester to appreciate our rich natural resources in this province. Invasive species have the potential to impact the quality of life of our drinking water and damage our beaches. They could decimate the urban tree canopy and have the capacity to devastate our

forestry industry.

The challenge of addressing invasive species will require all the tools that we can provide. There have been successes in limiting the damage to and promoting the health of native species populations, but we have a responsibility to do more. We can provide stronger legislative frameworks to support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province. That is what the proposed Invasive Species Act would do.

I'm confident all members will agree that the problem of invasive species warrants strong action and detection and dedicated legislation, and I encourage them to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's introduction of Bill 167, the Invasive Species Act, 2014. Certainly, we're happy to see legislation brought forward on invasive species. We've all heard it from our respective ridings. Probably what has been in the news most is the Asian carp and its invasion, so we're pleased to see the government begin to take action on dealing with this, specifically with the Asian carp. The minister mentioned in his comments that the fishing industry is a \$2.2-billion industry to Ontario's economy. The Asian carp could very well devastate that. We've already found it in tributaries coming into one of our borders. So we've heard of these issues.

I want to comment on the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who's going to speak next, but also our MNR critic, the member from Oshawa. They have both testified in the US about the impact of invasive species on threatening our livelihoods, our quality of life, as the minister said, and our environment. So bringing in legislation to deal with invasive species—and I know I mentioned mostly Asian carp, but some of the other invasive species were mentioned by the minister: zebra mussels, emerald ash borer, round gobies, and I know he men-

tioned a lot of plant species. It depends where you live, what species is affecting the area that you represent.

But early detection, eradication—I'm pleased to see there's going to be some teeth in this, with some enforcement, some fines, some possible jail time. It's an incredibly serious issue for us in Ontario, and I'm pleased that the Liberal government has actually brought a piece of legislation in that we will be supporting. We can't wait till it actually gets to committee, because I think there are many more stakeholders who do want to comment on that. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The mem-

ber for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this important government bill, Bill 167, the Invasive Species Act. But again, it's one of those feel-good bills, because the bill doesn't address hiring any any new enforcement officers or putting any money in the budget to actually do enforcement. I spoke to this issue yesterday under the family leave bill. It's fine and dandy to bring in new bills, but if you don't actually put the dollars in place to ensure that there's enforcement, what good is it?

The bill says that inspectors may conduct inspection activities to determine compliance. They may issue stop orders if they believe an offence is about to be undertaken. They may issue orders for up to 15 days for a particular species, and I understand there are at least around 200 or more endangered species in the province. Conservation officers, under fish and wildlife, are inspectors, but the ministry can appoint foresters and biologists.

But the bill doesn't speak to how many we are actually going to appoint. Are we going to be hiring any additional people? How much money is the government going to put to this bill to ensure that it gets implemented and that it's going to make a difference for the endangered species and for wildlife in this province?

We, the New Democratic Party, and our leader, Andrea Horwath, look forward to getting this bill into committee so that we can put forward amendments that will certainly strengthen this bill and, hopefully, make it a good piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Minister for Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is really a piece of legislation that—I'm encouraged, actually, to hear the comments from the members of the opposition so far that indeed they are in support of this legislation. It's almost impossible to explain just how important this is. I think we should all applaud the Minister of Natural Resources for bringing this forward and for recognizing the kinds of measures we need to take legislatively to deal with the extraordinarily big challenge we have, related to invasive species.

Again, it's not just the province of Ontario. It's wonderful that we will be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation, but there's no doubt—the minister referenced it—that this is not just a provincial matter. It's a national matter, it's an international matter. When one speaks about the economic impact of Asian carp entering into the water streams in Ontario and the Great Lakes, it's quite frankly unimaginable. The work that is being done in that regard involves international jurisdictions and the US as well.

I have the experience of having spent some time as Minister of Natural Resources as well, and I know how committed the ministry staff are to making sure we do

the right thing. I applaud the minister.

I also want to do a bit of a shout-out to organizations all across the province. I think of Trees Thunder Bay. I think of the work that they're doing. I happen to be related to the Thunder Bay city forester, who, when I was minister, taught me a great deal about the emerald ash borer and how important it is to keep it away from or out of the parts of the province it has not yet gotten to, because the impact is profound.

Congratulations to the minister. A strong legislative framework is necessary to enable the prevention and the early detection—and the education of the public—in

terms of how we deal with invasive species.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to see the government introduce this kind of legislation. The world has changed; it has gotten a lot smaller. Invasive species that are not natural to our environment, to our part of the world, find their way here in many, many ways that were not possible years ago. I am glad that they're doing something about it.

We have got to ensure that for non-natural species like the Asian long-horned beetle, the emerald ash borer, the Asian carp, and zebra mussels, which we have been dealing with for years—we have to make sure that our response to these invasive species is swift and meaningful. Half-measures will not do. These species do not have natural predators or natural enemies here. They have them where they came from, but they don't have them here. We have to ensure that our response to these invasive species is something that is massively done. We have to eradicate them before they do further damage to us.

Our fishing industry is under a great threat from some of these invasive species. If the Asian carp gets into our Great Lakes system, we're in big trouble. That's a \$2billion industry. We cannot allow these species to take over this part of the world. We have to make sure that we have the measures in place, we have the tools in place and I appreciate what the minister is doing—that we can take really strong action. This is not something we can be timid about. We can't namby-pamby around this and talk about, "Oh, we might do some damage to a lovely little fish or something." No. These species do not belong here, they are not natural to our environment and we have to take the strongest measures possible to protect the species that are part of the ecosystem here. Otherwise we're in big trouble. I'm not mincing words here: We need to act fast and we need to act in the strongest way possible as soon as possible.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member from Welland, as well as the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, sharing their comments on this issue, which I think we can all agree is clearly a non-partisan issue. This is an issue about protecting our natural resources and protecting our environment. We know that these species that are invading Ontario pose very real threats to both our economy and our quality of life.

We've seen what's happened in British Columbia with the mountain pine beetle and the incredible devastation to the forestry industry, with nearly a billion dollars spent on attempting to eradicate one species.

But we are spending money in Ontario today to combat these various species. I mentioned the emerald ash borer in the city of Toronto, \$37 million; up to \$95 million on zebra mussels. The federal government spends \$29 million on the sea lamprey. The list is beginning to lengthen and cost additional resources.

It is so important that we break down the silos and ensure that both internationally and in Canada, at all levels of government, we are working effectively to develop the best strategies. Early detection is key to reducing costs. Our government invested in the Invasive Species Centre because of the concentration of scientific knowledge in our community, in partnership with the federal government, to do exactly that.

I certainly recognize the concerns of the members opposite as well, and many of them have been very supportive in their comments. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk is going to speak on this issue; he did at first reading and expressed his support for this. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, from the NDP, did express his support as well.

I'm optimistic that this legislation will move expeditiously through the House so that we can put this in place as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 167, the Invasive Species Act, 2014. Let me start off by saying that as it stands at this particular time, I don't believe that our party will be opposing but will be supporting the legislation. We haven't received all the input from all the stakeholders that are out there, but any of the stakeholders that we have been in touch with are certainly supportive, and as such, so will this party be at this particular time.

There are many aspects of this bill that need to be brought forward and discussed that haven't been brought forward. I'll take it on a line-by-line basis. The minister just briefly mentioned some of the aspects that we're talking about. The cost for zebra mussels: He mentioned the \$95-million fee on the zebra mussels alone, but I

don't necessarily know if the minister has checked with groups like Ontario Hydro, for example, which have probably spent in excess of \$95 million alone on zebra mussels to clear the intake and the outflow water pipes on an annual basis from our nuclear plants.

When I brought in a bill in 1999 to deal with ballast water discharge, to specifically deal with species that were coming in, there was about a 29%, if I recall—a study showed that in 1991, 29% of the releases of invasive species coming into Ontario were through ballast water discharge. We tried to deal with that particular topic because, as I recall, there was one—I think it was the comb jellyfish—that came in from the Black Sea and it was tracked down to one specific ship that had come into a port in the States. Once it released its discharge of ballast water, it had introduced the new jellyfish, and there had been a substantial die-off of the recreational fishery in that particular state. I think it was Michigan where it finally got in and started to infiltrate into the Great Lakes at that time.

Some of these things that need to be addressed and some of the areas that we need to talk about are how the government can move forward on addressing this bill.

If you go across Canada, you'll see there are many species that have come in, like Dutch elm disease. If you go into western Canada—I was in Saskatchewan last summer, and at that time you would see all these bags—yes, the Clerk would remember—around all the elm trees. It was to try and stop Dutch elm disease from killing off all the elm trees in Regina. They have a huge program out there.

Some of the other aspects are the impacts of things such as the pine beetle in western Canada, whether it's in BC or in Alberta. We need to talk about some of the impacts there, because it's had a substantial impact on the Ontario economy alone. People don't realize that now, all of a sudden, we have this huge die-off. In BC and Alberta, the pine beetle came in and killed all the trees, or the forestry sector got permission to cut down all these trees before they got wasted away. They were standing, rotting trees, so there was an additional cut that was allowed out there.

What that did was it increased the amount of dimensional wood that was produced in BC and Alberta that's now shipped all over North America, and Asia and other markets as well, that we are competing with on a regular basis. But because the tree is going to go to waste if it's standing and slowly rotting, they reduced the cost for it, or they reduced the amount of stumpage fees or the amount—and the sheer numbers of the volumes of the cut that's allowed—the minister would know the allowable cut in the province of Ontario. The millions of cubic metres have substantially increased, and not only that, but some of these trees that are cut dimensionally are now brought into Ontario at a reduced rate, competing with the Ontario tree and forestry sector.

So if you look out there—and this is what the forestry sector is telling me. In some sectors, some of these trees have made it back in and are now competing with Ontario wood, because it's a reduced-rate wood that's processed in BC and Alberta. So we have to look on a Canada-wide basis at what's going to take place.

In some of the previous research that I had done, groups like the Federation of Ontario Naturalists had identified three specific types of invaders. There were natural invaders, accidental invaders and intentional invaders. Some of the natural invaders were some of the opossum or the white-tailed deer that slowly migrated north into Ontario and started to become resident. I can recall back in the early 1980s, maybe late 1970s, being in a place called Foleyet, which is basically halfway between Sudbury and Timmins; that would be best for the average Ontarian to understand where it is. At that time, when I first started going there, there were never any raccoons in the area. Now you'll regularly find raccoons because they've slowly migrated there; the same with the covote and a number of other animals that have been listed as what would be classified as a natural invader.

Then we have what the FON—Federation of Ontario Naturalists—at that time listed as accidental invaders, such as what happened in 1959, when the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened up. It allowed the sea lamprey to come into the Great Lakes. The difficulty there, and everybody knows what's taken place and the huge amount of costs that take place—I think it is \$29 million, if I remember my figures correctly, that the federal government and the other jurisdictions pay just to control the number of sea lampreys in the province of Ontario. I can tell you, you know when lampricide is going through the streams because all of a sudden you see all the turkey vultures accumulate along the stream ways, feeding on those dead carcasses of the sea lamprey. It's certainly something that's necessary. It devastated a lot of the fishing industry, and I can recall—as a matter of fact, we don't understand a lot of the impacts.

One of the individuals we inducted into the sports hall of fame was a swimmer from Oshawa who, at the youngest age, was swimming across Lake Ontario. Part of her discussion was about how, when she got out of the water, there were about half a dozen sea lampreys attached to her.

These are things that people don't realize about these accidental incidents or invaders that have taken place and how they impact the economy, whether it's recreational fishery and the devastation that's done there, which is a huge industry in the province of Ontario, as well as other aspects, and we've already mentioned some of the ones with the pine beetle.

You talk about the emerald ash borer beetle and what has taken place there. The minister mentioned that and mentioned the amount of funds being spent in Toronto alone dealing with the emerald ash borer beetle. When you talk about that, you see how municipalities—and I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was speaking on the bill as well, and it was good to hear that. In his own community of Thunder Bay, a discussion had taken place by the developers about the canopy that they're required to plant when they're putting in new

subdivisions. This is all taken into consideration, and we have to understand how this great picture comes together. What happens now is, if you look at the amount of trees and the types of trees that developers are required to plant in their developments, they reflect the impact of such things as the emerald ash borer beetle.

In Oshawa, for example, we only have—I can't remember the specifics; I believe it was less than 10% of the canopy is ash trees, which are now being hugely impacted by the emerald ash borer beetle. What's taking place there now is the replacement of these trees and the spreading of the beetle. The beetle effectively goes inbores in, just like it says-and what it does is, the larva eats its way around the tree. It does something called girdling. A bark works like a skin or a vein, and between the bark and the tree, you get the flow of the nutrients or the sap in the maple trees in the spring. For those that don't know, birch trees do the same thing and can be harvested, as they do in western Canada. But the girdling that's done by the emerald ash borer beetle effectively kills the tree and stops the sap from flowing up. That's how it works.

#### 0940

So there are two methods by which they can deal with this, and it's very costly. Depending on the girth of the tree—the larger the tree the more applications are required—they will do a syringe injection of a fluid that kills off the beetle, which is very time-consuming and very costly. Each injection is about \$100. Some trees will take two, three or four various injections in order to kill off the beetle. What they try to do with this particular borer beetle and the injection is, they try to have it so that, as the beetle is moving through the community, they protect those trees. The injection lasts for about two years and stops the emerald ash borer beetle at that particular point, killing them off. It stops the migration of the tree bud.

As we constantly see now, they try to stop individuals from taking firewood through different parts of the province, or wood as a whole. But how are you going to stop the forest industry from dealing with what has gone on? It's in the millions of cubic metres that is transported throughout Ontario, whether it's hardwood in the veneer mills or the SPF, the spruce-pine-firs, in the slicer mills that they produce. It's difficult to contain all those on a province-wide basis when you're dealing with such huge industries.

We look at methods by which we control this. One is the injection of this fluid to stop the emerald ash borer beetle with that particular hardwood. Another one is a rather toxic one, according to the individuals I met with and discussed it, where they use basically a fertilizer type of material that is absorbed through the roots. But it's so toxic to the other plants that it basically kills everything else in that area in order to try and stop the emerald ash borer beetle. So there's a couple of ways that it's done, but it's very costly.

The municipalities are now putting out a huge amount of dollars—tax dollars, quite frankly—that the taxpayers

have to pay in order to protect these trees. The same thing has happened in the past as is taking place in Regina and other parts of western Canada, Manitoba, with Dutch elm disease and them trying to stop Dutch elm disease and protect their elm trees. So we try and react in many of these cases.

It's the same with purple loosestrife. I can remember taking the kids out and going into the Second Marsh in Oshawa, picking all the purple loosestrife and putting it into the bag, containing all the seeds and making sure it got disposed of. All that did was slow the process by which purple loosestrife was expanding in the province of Ontario. It was a great attempt and was a learning experience, but it's very costly. We're looking at these methods by which they come in. There's a number of methods by which they come in. My understanding was that purple loosestrife effectively came in from florists, who were providing a great purple flower in their arrangements which is now distributed throughout the province of Ontario. Lo and behold, we have purple loosestrife now entrenched in the province of Ontario, and it has a significant impact on a number of sectors.

But there are many ways that we get affected. The stats on that comb jellyfish: That was introduced by a single ship. In 1999, within six years, it had reduced the fish harvest by 90%. We don't realize these things that come in, but it can be attributed—actually, at the time that I presented this bill, I had all-party support, which was great. But as we know, private members' bills have a lack of tendency to move forward, so it's great to see that the minister was able to bring this.

I was asked to present before the US Senate committee, and the shipping industry was not too happy, because the comb jellyfish could actually be attributed to one specific ship. What I tried to do was make them responsible for the cleanup. And I see that the penalties in here for it up to \$1 million for the first incident, in order to cover the costs for cleanup—sort of the introduction.

There's one section of the bill that I hoped the minister would make note of where I had a little bit of concern in the way the legislation was brought forward. It should come to committee, and we want to make sure that is addressed in regard to the introduction. It was specifically stating that, under section 8:

"Prohibitions, moderate threat invasive species,

"Introduction, deposit and release

"8. (1) No person shall,

"(a) Bring a member of a moderate threat invasive species into a provincial park or conservation reserve," and then it breaks it down farther on. But I think it should add the words "knowingly or intentionally."

Later on it goes into due diligence, as expressed in the legislation. But knowingly and intentionally bringing something is far different than somebody who has a bait bucket—whereby they bring a rusty crayfish, when they bought crayfish for bait, into an area, and now they're held responsible for the introduction of that species. The same thing with the round goby and other things that obviously the COs check for, to make sure that bait

buckets are not containing those sorts of things. But a lot of individuals, the first time out getting involved in the activities or sports, may not be familiar. So knowingly or intentionally introducing something would be something that might assist in ensuring that the legislation is acted out with its intent.

There are many other things that I want to discuss about the bill. Under section 4 in the explanatory note, it talks about "classified as either a significant threat or a moderate threat." The determination—who decides which is which? It's the breakdown of where it comes in—and is there a review body which determines at what level the threat is specifically included?

We very much appreciate the inspections and the warrant that is required to enter a place or dwelling. However, when you go into the legislation later on, there doesn't appear to be a warrant required for entering properties that may contain some of the invasive species. We have some concerns about—sometimes there will be a CO, for example. If I remember correctly, the way it's worded here, the CO is an inspector immediately, by position, and I would assume there would be training for that. But the CO can also designate an individual to come with them. Some communities would be concerned that the designate might be an OPP officer who might be checking for other aspects and doesn't have permission to enter properties. We constantly hear, in opposition, and when we had that privilege and honour to be in government, about how COs work with MTO and the OPP and were doing things like, under a CO's non-requirement for a warrant, to check whether people were using coloured gas or not-diesel. We want to make sure that the real intent of this is specifically targeting invasive species, which we all support-to ensure it is not taking place in the province of Ontario.

There were a number of other areas. We've gone through the bill and made note by note. I've slowly walked through it, picking out some of the spots that I wanted to deal with.

The publication of the order: It's to be notified, so it's good that, by a newspaper in general circulation of an area, people are informed about a species coming in. For example, in Oshawa I've sent out notices to households. They were completely unaware of the emerald ash borer beetle, yet they have monstrous 100-year-old ash trees that could be affected. They had no idea of the requirement for protection. I remember one particular incident where I notified—they had an ash tree which is just magnificent. It's probably about this big around in regard to size. The difficulty with that is that it's close to the house. The emerald ash borer beetle was in the area, because I know where the testing was, and I happened to see some of the trees that had been affected. This individual wasn't really fully aware of what was taking place. The cost to have a crane come in and remove that tree would probably be in the tens of thousands of dollars in order to remove a tree that's that close to the household, whereas it would cost probably \$300 every two years to maintain it until the emerald ash borer beetle

had run its cycle and is no longer prevalent in the area. In that way, it would save the individual huge amounts of dollars. So it's important to have notification.

It goes on that a posting would take place when an area is found to be contaminated with an invasive species. It's important to ensure that the neighbours are notified of it as well, because the impact on them is going to be quite substantial. As much as Oshawa tries to get the message out, it's difficult for everybody in those particular areas to become aware. I realize that the costs of dealing with this could be rather significant. However, the cost of not dealing with it would be a lot more for individuals—to have to pay to have these trees removed or replaced in their yards or their properties, because it is quite costly—and the impact, as well, on the forest industry. We spoke about how the pine beetle affected western Canada and how we are impacted, and the forestry sector is seeing some of that impact here. But as well, ash trees are very good for many construction uses, whether it's handles-ash handles are very popular-or in a number of other areas. So if it's utilized correctly, how would you be able to process those materials into functional aspects of society while the tree has died without further spreading the emerald ash borer beetle around? These are some of the things that, hopefully, the ministry is taking into consideration: how they can address some of the very specifics.

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I think that back in 1999—I'm not sure if I had mentioned—to date to 1999, there had been 140 exotic species or invasive species that had come in, which included the ruffe, round goby, zebra mussel, purple loosestrife and many others in the Great Lakes. Something else that has to be taken into consideration is working with the other jurisdictions, whether it's Quebec, Manitoba—quite frankly, we are the only province on the Great Lakes but with the other US jurisdictions around. When I was asked to present before the US Senate committee, they were very interested, and actually, a number of the states had moved forward with legislation to address the very issue of ballast water discharge because of the impact on their communities as well. Working relationships and ensuring that the federal government comes forward in playing a partner in this is very important as well. The minister mentioned the sea lamprey and the cost for that particular program, but as well, if we look at the impact on the fisheries and the commercial fisheries from the other states, it's important that we all work together in ensuring that it's all taken care of to the best of our abil-

I had mentioned the purple loosestrife, and there were huge attempts to try and reduce the amount by going out and hand-picking—making sure the seeds weren't spreading. There was a beetle that was developed by the ministry to go in and try to reduce the numbers, but then again, it's an intentional invader, as I mentioned earlier, which can be used to counter some of the actions of things like purple loosestrife or beetles introduced to kill off the plant. We have to make sure this beetle doesn't

become a problem later on. It's like that great Dr. Seuss book where, in order to get rid of a mouse in the house, they eventually bring in things to counter it. It ends up that how they get the elephant out of the house that chases the lion out is to bring back a mouse. The whole grand circle of things and how we as a society are impacted by these sorts of things—we just have to make sure that the eventual outcome of introducing species to address these particular invasive species is not something that becomes problematic in the future as well.

There are many other things that have taken place. For example, in—I can't remember which airport in New York state it was; however, a flock of parakeets got accidentally—during a shipment that was going to pet stores—released, and now there's a self-sustaining flock of parakeets that are only found in Central and South America that are now in New York state at the airport. They've become somewhat of a sight, these parakeets that are now there. They have self-sustaining populations, and guess what? They're slowly expanding, much as other species that have come forward.

There are other species as well that have been introduced, whether it's the ring-necked pheasant or the elk that has been reintroduced into province of Ontario or turkeys or a number of other things that have been brought back intentionally. I recall some of the reasonsthe minister would well know that one of the reasons that they were not going to release wild turkeys onto Manitoulin Island was because of the fact that the wild turkeys ate bugs, and there's a very special leafhopper on Manitoulin Island that they were concerned would be negatively impacted once the wild turkeys had moved into that area. Also, I can recall the discussions in the past that we were given—as the former Minister of Natural Resources-about the expansion of the turkey flocks and the release of those in the province of Ontario. There were some strong concerns that if we released them into certain areas, they-these are intentional invaders as listed by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists—would negatively impact other species in the particular area. When that takes place, the guidelines that the ministry had established were, what were the traditional boundaries of the wild turkey, for example, and they tried to maintain those traditional areas that wild turkey was native to in the province of Ontario.

However, as we mentioned about the white-tailed deer slowly expanding its territory in the province—and I can recall in the 1970s when there were more car-deer collisions in New York state alone than there were of the entire deer population in the province of Ontario—it slowly expanded farther and farther north so that the populations of deer have moved forward. The position at that time in the ministry, which we tried to influence, was that we need to make sure that these areas are specifically taken into consideration. If the deer are expanding, so would the turkey range, because they kind of countered each other or dealt with each other; as the deer expanded, so should the range of that.

We very much appreciate the need for a warrant in dwellings. However, as I expressed earlier on, we have a strong concern about the use of warrants for properties as a whole. As I read the legislation—unless the minister can say otherwise—a warrant is not required to enter a property, only a dwelling on a property. So this allows inspectors—and the CO is listed simply by their job as an inspector on this—access to any properties that they deem fit. The difficulty is the individuals that they can deem as assistants to come on with them. Could that be an OSPCA—Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—individual coming on board?

I know the member from Peterborough—knowing his rural community, some of the farming community would have concerns about those sorts of things happening, and establishing guidelines or the ability to ensure that the correct individuals—that the intent of the legislation is being followed out. Many times we bring these things forward, and the intent sometimes happens to open up doors to other activities that cannot be part of the intent.

I mentioned the notification to the surrounding properties, to ensure that it is done in the best way we can so that the individuals are notified of it and realize the impact, and I realize the minister is moving forward in the best way possible. I think we have a significant amount of support in many aspects of this. We want to ensure, as we continue on with globalization, what takes place, that we're not exposing ourselves to many more diseases and insects, as such, coming forward.

Some of the aspects, as well—when you read the legislation, there doesn't appear to be any funding specifically allocated that's going to be there to ensure that what needs to be done gets done in the province of Ontario. I realize the ministry is trying to look at ways of cost recovery. We constantly read petitions, because there are some strong concerns about the hunting and fishing regulations not being readily available to individuals there and accessible to individuals. It's very difficult, as we've stated in the past-how an individual would be on a boat and be able to gain an understanding, on that particular lake, what the specific catch requirements or limitations are, and we want to make sure there are enough funds available to ensure that the people who are going to do the job have the necessary requirements and the funds to make it happen.

In summary, Madam Speaker, there are a significant number of things that we've tried to bring forward: the aspect of warrantless entry on properties, not dwellings, is good; the use of an appointed individual to come on with it; to ensure that there's adequate funding; to make sure that we look at other jurisdictions and not become solely dependent—we have to work with the federal government to ensure things on international trade. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency—most don't realize they handle a lot of those things. When the emerald ash borer beetle first came into Ontario in-I believe it was around Windsor, Ontario, and slowly expanded from that area the belief was that it came in on skids. So when they were making skids, the skids had been infested with eggs or with beetles. The skids were not ensured to be insectfree, and they moved forward. It was the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that was handling most of that, to try to deal with it in that particular area. It hasn't been successful. I know there were huge cut-offs of many of the trees in that area in order to stop it. We have it in Oshawa; we have it in a number of areas as well.

It's the same thing with some of the pine beetles, whether it's western Canada or some of the European pine beetles that have come in and are attacking some of the forests here. We need to make sure that we work with the other jurisdictions, not as an independent or as an island but in the best way that we can all work with all the jurisdictions on behalf of all of the people of the province of Ontario.

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Madam Speaker, I'm going to be sharing my time with the member—I want to make sure I get all aspects of his riding correct—from Haldimand–Norfolk. I've left a significant discussion about the Asian carp, because it's something my colleague wants to discuss. He has a strong passion for it and has been speaking on it on a number of occasions in a number of locations—the impact of the Asian carp and how that's going to affect many of us.

We need to work together, and I think we'll continue to do so. With that, Madam Speaker, I'll free up the time for my colleague to continue on with the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 167, the Invasive Species Act. I thank our MNR critic for sharing some of his time with me. Jerry, as we know, is a former Minister of Natural Resources and has done a tremendous amount of work in this field, particularly on those invasives into our Great Lakes.

I think he mentioned that back in the year 2000 he testified before a US Senate committee with respect to ballast water. He presented legislation in this House, a private member's bill, to better enable us to protect the lakes on that particular front.

Mr. Ouellette mentioned that I testified recently before the US Army Corps of Engineers with respect to Asian carp. I attended the hearings down in New Orleans. My wife and I were on vacation, so I had an opportunity to spend a day over there.

The US government and various state governments are doing a tremendous amount of work on Asian carp. It's incumbent on us in the province of Ontario and, of course, the federal government to step up to the plate as well, because they are on their way. It is a clear and present danger.

I found that in New Orleans I got a whole other perspective. In one sense, I was about as popular as a snake at a garden party, because the other 12 presenters represented the shipping industry—the tow tug, the barge industry on the Mississippi—and the crucial aspect of that industry to access the Great Lakes through the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

Here again, when we deal with legislation like this, we're taking on Mother Nature, which makes us all understand how complex this is. When you bring in a

law, there's no guarantee that the possums, the whitetailed deer or the coyotes that have arrived are going to obey our law. They're subject to the law of Mother Nature, as we are.

With respect to the shipping industry, they made some very good economic points. We have to be careful just on this one species—well, there are several species of Asian carp. If they get into Lake Erie, does that mean we shut down the Welland Canal? I don't think that's going to happen. We have to be cognizant of this when we see groups calling for the shutting down—essentially, the hydrological separation of the Great Lakes from the Mississippi basin at Chicago. I call for an ecological separation, and we can continue to do that through electric current, for example; sound vibration; the use of chemicals. Mr. Ouellette made mention of the use of lampricide year after year to fight the sea lamprey.

The jury is still out on how best to deal with that particular group of invading species, the Asian carp. The grass carp are in the lakes now, and the big concern is the silvers—these are the jumpers—and the bighead carp.

I do want to go back to another area. There has been made mention of stakeholders that have an interest: the bait industry; agriculture, of course; forestry; and the ornamental plant industry, the greenhouse growers, where we get our flowers. We heard mention of purple loosestrife. Those greenhouses are going to be open for business in another matter of weeks. I don't want to make any predictions, but it looks like spring is finally here.

Just by way of example, first off, I want to point out a very clear and present—a very close—example of what we're dealing with here. I ask the members present: The next time you walk out the front door of this Legislature, take a walk over to the southeast. There is a gigantic, beautiful maple tree. It's one of the biggest maple trees you'll see anywhere in this part of Toronto. It's not a sugar maple; it's a Norway maple. It's an invasive species. There may be a reaction. I have a Husqvarna. I'm not sure what brand you use, Jerry.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: STIHL.

Mr. Toby Barrett: He's a STIHL man; I'm Husqvarna. I used to run Homelite. That's old-school, I guess. Sure, you can pull out a chainsaw and cut it down. You can hit the shoots with an herbicide. That's one approach, but then there's the other side of it. What kind of a furor would there be if we were to cut that invasive species down on the front lawn of the Ontario Legislature? It's a city tree. They are trees that have been brought in. They're kind of an urban street tree. A number of years ago, they were used to replace the dead elms from Dutch elm disease. Again, like so many invasives, the roots arrived from Europe in the mid-1700s for use as an ornamental.

That particular tree isn't a problem. It's surrounded by asphalt and traffic. It's really not going to take over downtown Toronto. However, if you take a look at the beautiful ravines in Toronto known for their wildlife, many of these famous ravines are now infested. There is virtually nothing else apparent. You don't really see anything else growing under the canopy of Norway

maples. It's just as much of a concern, or should be just as much of a concern; the Norway maple is just as much a concern in Toronto as the Norway rat, for that matter.

If I'm going to talk about wildlife in the city of Toronto, of course, there are too many raccoons. I personally think there are too many squirrels in the north end of Queen's Park here. There are some solutions for that, and one very good solution is the red-tailed hawks that we have around here. Again, we can pass some laws, but Mother Nature can kick in and help out as well.

As far as that particular tree, or other trees, you can cut it down. Shoots can come up. We know that since April 2009, we all have to obey regulation 63/09 of Ontario's Pesticide Act. I know that the minister made mention of other ministries that have a stake in this legislation as well. We know that with that particular regulation, there are exceptions for agriculture and forestry. There are provisions to use some of these products with respect to invasive species control.

Here's another example—again, going back to this category of ornamentals. If I were to look out the front door of my home, I look across my field—it's normally soybeans—about a quarter of a mile at the far end of the field is another maple. I didn't plant it there. It arrived from somewhere. I've planted some white spruce in that area. They're also an introduced species, I think, the same as the Colorados. What I have over in that corner is a Manitoba maple. I've left it there. I can control around that area; we farm around that area. I never considered it a concern. As far as maples, it's not, obviously, my favourite tree.

If I look to the west, again, just out the front door of my house, and I look to my pond—the ice is slowly coming out of that pond. For 15 years I've watched phragmites forcing out my cattails, and I've been in an all-out war with phragmites. I've tried just about everything. My specialty is Roundup. You can't spray over water. I use a long-handled paint roller, where I flatten the leaves of the phragmites. In September you do it when the fronds are out, and then roll it. I know MPP Monte McNaughton has done a considerable amount of work on this phragmites battle down in his part of the country.

The minister made mention of the Ministry of Transportation. If you drive down Highway 402, going west of London, you'll see nothing but phragmites on Ontario government MTO property, from there right down to the Michigan border and further south, down towards Amherstburg and that way. I know there is a call certainly from my riding to have phragmites declared a noxious weed; that may be one approach that we could take.

Applause.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I hear a round of applause for that one

Look to the left out my front door: English ivy, climbing 40 or 50 feet up my black locust. English ivy that gets out of control—is it an invasive species? The black locust itself was brought up to our part of southern Ontario by original pioneers who came up from New York and New Jersey. You see an awful lot of black

locusts down in the US northeast. It's a wonderful wood, great firewood, makes great fence posts. It's great habitat for the various woodpeckers and nuthatches that get the insects out of the twisted bark of the black locust. It's a wonderful, wonderful tree. It fixes its own nitrogen, by the way, just like soybeans. So 40 feet up it's covered in English ivy; it's looked great for years. Then we had this hard winter and there's nothing but dead leaves and it really doesn't look that attractive. It does provide a habitat for the smaller birds. I just wonder how that can affect, say, the insects getting into the bark and how that's going to affect the food supply for the nuthatches.

Down below those trees is goat weed. I put in a rock garden; my wife planted goat weed and it took off. You can't even see the rocks anymore. Across the lane is periwinkle that we planted on our steep slopes that we can't mow. Some of it got dumped on the other side of the laneway. It's heading through my bush. It probably won't reach my father's bush, where the trilliums are, because it's got to go across Cockshutt Road. But again, periwinkle has been identified as an invasive species, and it can get out of control.

Across the lane and throughout much of my property just in the last few years there's garlic mustard. I don't know who brought garlic mustard here a hundred years ago. I understand part of it was for medicinal purposes: to use for ulcers, for gangrene, as a source of vitamin A and vitamin C. So I suppose we have a situation now—why pay, I don't know, \$12 for a bottle of vitamins? You can go out and grab some garlic mustard. I invite anyone here, if you want to come down to my farm and pull garlic mustard, you can have it for free and get all the vitamins that you want.

You can pull out those phragmites, if you want to give it a try. Those things are impossible to pull out or to dig out. They're very tough. They're something like burdock or teasels. I've spent decades fighting these kinds of weeds.

Here's the kicker: Just south of my house a number of years ago I planted Russian olive. It's identified under the invading species hotline. I'm going to read out this number, by the way. Invading species hot line: You dial 1-800-563-7711. The Russian olive is identified on the hotline. I planted them. Guess where I bought them? I bought them from MNR. I bought them from the St. Williams Forestry Station, Speaker. So again, new evidence, new knowledge comes along and it just lets us know—I have a feeling our time is up—that we can pass laws but we're also dealing with some of those laws that have been dreamed up by Mother Nature. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It is 10:15 of the clock, so this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that my critic the member for Oxford is going to want to do some introduc-

tions as well; I will begin. In question period today we have, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Keith Currie, who is the vice-president; Paul Wettlaufer, who is the director of zone 2, from Bruce and Grey; Peggy Brekveld, the director of zone 15: Algoma, Cochrane, Dryden, Kenora, Manitoulin-North Shore, Nipissing east and west, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury east and west, Timiskaming and Thunder Bay; and Larry Davis, director of zone 3, from Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk. Welcome to OFA and all the other candidates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford: You can carry on.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the members from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture who are here today to talk about how to grow Ontario's agriculture industry. In the gallery we have Peggy Brekveld, Paul Wettlaufer, Larry Davis, Keith Currie, Ralph Brodie, Drew Spoelstra, Don McCabe and Joe Dickenson. I would like to welcome them all to Queen's Park. I would hope that we all meet them in the dining room this evening at their reception.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would like to introduce some new friends I made this morning. I have Seamus Morrin; his mom, Arleen Morrin; and his sister, Erin Morrin, from Brampton. Seamus is aspiring to become the Premier and Prime Minister.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to rise to introduce and welcome to the chamber Miss Italy, Giulia Arena, who is here, together with Marcello Cambi, Italian journalist; Luigi Fioravanti, Italian photographer; Tony Pavia, Italian photographer; and Gino Cucchi, my constituent and the president of Comites. Welcome to the chamber. Benvenuti.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Today is Burlington day at Queen's Park. It is my honour to stand here today to introduce the mayor, Rick Goldring; his chief of staff, Jackie Isada; councillors Rick Craven, Marianne Meed Ward, Blair Lancaster, Jack Dennison and Paul Sharman; city manager Jeff Fielding—it keeps going—and his assistant, Leah Bisutti; Scott Stewart, Helen Walihura, Ian Cameron, Donna Kell, Bruce Zvaniga, Allan Magi and Joan Ford. Thank you so much.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** On behalf of the NDP caucus, I would also like to welcome the directors of the OFA here today, especially my director, a very good friend of mine, Peggy Brekveld.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a lot of guests today. I want to start with the students in grade 10 at Dr. Norman Bethune, who are visiting, along with their teachers Ms. Rimell and Ms. Stojanovski.

As well, I have a lot more guests visiting, starting with the College of Trades: Mr. David Tsubouchi, CEO of the College of Trades—all of us know who he is; Pat Blackwood, vice-chair of the College of Trades; Gail Smyth, executive director of Skills Canada Ontario; John Norris, Collision Industry Information Assistance; John James, stylist; John Grimshaw, IBEW and Construction Council of Ontario; Fred Black, representative from the Electrical Contractors of Ontario; Chris Paswisty, Sheet Metal

Workers' and Roofers' Conference; and Vince Kacaba of the Ontario Pipe Trades Council, as well as all the tradespeople who are visiting Queen's Park. Welcome to Oueen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to welcome the directors of the OFA—my great director is Paul Wettlaufer, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—and, of course, Miss Italy.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would like to welcome Ana Mateus, who's at the back there. She is a social work student from Ryerson University. She has had a placement in my office for virtually a whole year. It has been a great pleasure to have her working with me in the constituency office.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** I'd like to introduce Brian Maloney, who is here from Kingston.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to introduce two members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Mr. Don McCabe, the vice-president, and also Ralph Brodie, a past president with the Kent Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: We are going to be visited shortly—you just ran by them when you came up. They are from Israel and they are with the Diller teen development program from Eilat, Israel. There are 22 of them and they will be joining us shortly.

Mr. Steve Clark: I too want to thank all the directors of the OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, for being here today and I want to thank them for their unwavering support, Premier, in keeping agricultural education at Kemptville college.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's moments like that that make it difficult for me to introduce guests, when we are asked to simply introduce our guests. Thank you.

The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Brent Royce, a member of the OFA from my riding of Perth-Wellington.

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** I think I heard her name previously, but my constituent from the OFA is here as well, Peggy Brekveld, and I'd like to welcome to her to the Legislature today.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** It's a pleasure to welcome Bruce Buttar from the OFA to the Legislature today. Welcome, Bruce.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I'd like to welcome Gino Cucchi from Comites and from the St. Clair area business improvement association. Welcome, Gino.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition from the Speaker, we have with us today the former member for Markham in the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. David Tsubouchi. David, welcome.

*Applause* 

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For those who may not know, David was also on the shortlist for the Speaker's Book Award for his autobiography. Congratulations on being an author.

I also would like to welcome from my riding of Brant, Mr. Larry Davis from the OFA.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### SKILLED TRADES

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The question is to the Premier. I was talking to a young man in my riding named Justin. Justin wants to be an electrician. He's finishing off high school at E.L. Crossley and he wants to get in the trades. But he was asking me why the Kathleen Wynne Liberals and the NDP stand in his way of getting a good job in the trades.

The Ontario College of Trades has locked in outdated apprenticeship ratios. They limit opportunities and they're going to charge him a new tax. If I could do anything, I want to create a million jobs in our province, I want to see Justin achieve his dream of being an electrician in the province of Ontario.

My question to you, Premier, is: Why are you standing in the way of Justin getting a good job in the skilled trades?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Before I go to the Premier, a reminder that we refer to each other either by our title, specifically our title, and the ridings. I would appreciate very much your cooperation.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We very much want Justin to have the opportunity to develop a skilled trade. I want to thank David Tsubouchi, who has taken on a leadership role with the College of Trades. What the College of Trades is about is making sure that people who work in the skilled trades have decision-making power over what matters to them. That is the professionalism that we had wanted to put in place. That's what the College of Trades is about.

I very much hope that Justin, whether he has taken part in a Specialist High Skills Major, which is a program that we have put into our high schools, whether he is looking at getting into an apprenticeship at this point in his career, whether he had the opportunity to take part in a pre-apprenticeship program in high school—there are many paths to skilled trades. The College of Trades puts that professionalism framework around that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's my point, Premier. Justin can't find an apprenticeship position because you're, quite frankly, in the pockets of the special interests, including Pat Dillon, who runs a Liberal negative ad—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please. Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

Clearly, the Premier would rather listen to Pat Dillon, who runs the negative Liberal ad campaign, where I'm

on the side of job creators and young people who want to get into the skilled trades. You know, a show I loved watching as I was going to university in the late 1980s was St. Elsewhere. Grey's Anatomy is a popular one today. You don't see a flock of doctors around one intern going from patient to patient. You see a flock of interns learning from one doctor. Last time I checked, doctors care very much about public safety. All I'm asking is to go to a 1-to-1 ratio. A mentor-to-apprenticeship ratio like other provinces, including NDP Manitoba, will do. That will get Justin to work and bring 200,000 jobs into the skilled trades. That's what I'm all about; why not you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. I'm quite prepared—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still standing. I am quite prepared to get attention here, but the difficulty is, I'm still hearing heckling when the question is being put from the same side, as I'm trying to get attention to the other side when the answers are given. My tolerance level will not be very high today.

Carry on.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The screenwriters for Grey's Anatomy are not the people who develop our policy. That may be how the Leader of the Opposition develops his policy, but that's not how we do it. And if the Leader of the Opposition imagines that a doctor—or a nurse or a teacher—has one mentor throughout his or her training, then that just is evidence that the Leader of the Opposition really doesn't understand how training works, and how people learn a trade or a skill or a profession. It takes many people to work with a professional, and that is the reality.

We have put the College of Trades in place. We're very grateful to the people who have taken a leadership role there. We want people in the skilled trades to have control over the important decisions in their professions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

Mr. Tim Hudak: We know who writes your script. It's Pat Dillon and the Working Families Coalition. Honest to goodness, Premier, it's almost word for word.

Let me tell you where I get my advice from, and I'll help Justin and 200,000 people like him get good apprenticeship jobs in skilled trades. I see what Liberal British Columbia does. I see what Progressive Conservative Alberta does. I even see what NDP Manitoba does. And you know what? I hear it from employers, I hear it from young workers and I hear it from Garfield Dunlop who lives and breathes and walks—

Interjections.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Quite frankly, Garfield Dunlop has probably forgotten more about the skilled trades than you and I would ever know combined.

I think I've got the facts on my side. I've got jobs on my side. I'm on the side of young people to get jobs in the skilled trades, of new Canadians who want to put those skills to work in the province of Ontario. Why are you standing in their way? Why are you against 200,000 new jobs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you who's standing in the way of progress and modernization of the skilled trades. It's the Leader of the Opposition. I'll tell you who's standing in the way of \$185 million we're investing every year in the skilled trades and apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs. It's that Leader of the Opposition, who doesn't support those investments.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Chatham, come to order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll tell you who's standing in the way of jobs in the skilled trades, like the \$33 billion we're investing in infrastructure across this province. It's that Leader of the Opposition, who refuses to support those investments. I'll tell you who's standing in the way of apprentices across this province. It's the Leader of the Opposition, who wants the power to be able to dictate decisions in the skilled trades—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, come to order.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** —rather than have the confidence in the people in the skilled trades to make those decisions.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

New question.

#### SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I don't think I've ever seen such a broad-based coalition that says we should eliminate the College of Trades so we can get people to work in the province of Ontario. Just yesterday, the labourers' international union, in fact, the largest construction union in the entire province of Ontario, agreed with us. They stand against compulsory certification for carpenters—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resource will come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: If you're a union leader who's pro jobs and pro opportunity, I stand with you. But if you're a union leader who's against jobs, wants to restrict supply and pad their own pockets, I'm not on your side; I'm on the side of jobs and opportunity.

I stand with the labourers' international union. I stand with the small businesses. I stand with the young people who want to get into skilled trades. I stand with new Canadians who find that you're imposing this thick wall between them and a good middle-class job.

I'm clear where I stand: opportunity, hope, good jobs. Why, Premier, do you stand with the special interests?

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The plan that we are putting in place is a plan to bring jobs to this province. It's a plan that points to opportunity and security.

We look at what's happened over the last few days: an increase of 13,400 net new jobs, an unemployment rate that has fallen to 7.3%. It's fallen, Mr. Speaker. Thursday we announced revised deficit targets. We'll beat the target by \$400 million. Wednesday we tabled Ontario's long-term report on the economic health of the province. We announced investment in coffee club—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that will support 400 more jobs.

The work that we're doing on this side of the House is about creating that opportunity, moving forward, bringing jobs to the province. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition wants to make personal attacks. He's naming people in the House. That's not how we're going to function.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Sup-

plementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, respectfully, the only plan you seem to have is an exit plan for young talent who are leaving our province to head out west. I want to see that young talent get a good job in Ontario, buy a home, be able to afford to pay a mortgage. You know what? When you get a job in the skilled trades and you get a lot of experience, odds are you're going to start your own company down the road and hire more people. That's the kind of opportunity I want to see in Ontario.

I'm desperate to see Ontario working again. You're standing in the way. The labourers' international union, the coalition of job creators, young people—they're all saying, "Tear down this wall that stands in the way of getting good jobs in our province." The College of Trades has been an abject failure. Today is its one-year anniversary. This is your opportunity to hit the reset button, to say no to the special interests and yes to more jobs in our province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order. Member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Premier, will you join the Ontario PC caucus, say no to the College of Trades and say yes to 200,000 good apprenticeship jobs in the skilled trades?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to make sure that the Leader of the Opposition understands that the point of the College of Trades is to make sure that skilled tradespeople are certified to do the work that they're performing. That's the essence of the College of Trades. It seems to me that it would be a pretty precarious position for the Leader of the Opposition to take that people shouldn't be—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford will withdraw.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Withdraw.

**Hon.** Kathleen O. Wynne: —that people shouldn't be trained to perform the jobs that they're performing. That's the point.

On the issue of compulsory certification, we believe that the decision to certify or decertify as a compulsory trade should be made by skilled people through the college. That is the point of the College of Trades.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that ratios have been reviewed—more than their government reviewed when they were in office. These are not decisions that should be made by politicians, but rather by skilled—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm disappointed that the Premier seems to exhibit such a patent disregard for what the largest construction union in the province, LIUNA, has to say. Basically, your suggestion is that they're not qualified to do their job.

We're talking about 100,000 skilled construction professionals. What you want to do with your compulsory certification is, you want to take them off the job site. You want to tell people who pick up a hammer and a saw every day that they're not qualified to do the job in Liberal Ontario. You want them to go back to school. You want to close down businesses. This is not only me saying this; this is the largest construction union in the province. You know what? I'd take what Garfield Dunlop says any day, I'd take what LIUNA says any day over somebody who's clearly captured by the special interests.

1050

I don't know why, Premier, you persist of blocking the entryway into good middle-class jobs. You won't listen to me. Will you listen to the largest construction union in the province, say no to compulsory certification and say yes to more jobs?

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Let's talk about what the Leader of the Opposition stands for. He stands for the right to work for less for every worker in this place. He stands for a party that denigrates the capacity of skilled trade workers to govern themselves.

Let me tell you what we stand for. We believe in the capacity of skilled trade workers, just as 44 other professions, to govern themselves across this province. We believe that skilled trade workers are up to the job of governing themselves, like nurses, like social workers, like doctors and like lawyers.

It's too bad that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have the confidence in our skilled trade workers that we do. He wants to make those decisions himself. He wants those decisions made like they have been for the last 30 years: in smoky backrooms, in the backrooms of Queen's Park.

We're for modernizing the skilled trades. We're for giving skilled trade workers the ability to do it themselves.

Interiections.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. New question.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. When the Premier took over the Ontario Liberal Party, she said this: "We're going to build on the legacy of Dalton." Does she still stand by that statement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely; because of the work that we have done since 2003 in our education system and our health care system. In our health care system, wait times are down, and we've got more home care in the system, more doctors, more nurses. Kids are achieving more in school. We had 68% of kids graduating from school when we came into office; 83% of kids are graduating from high school today. I stand by that record absolutely every day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The Premier sat in cabinet when decisions on the gas plants were made, and signed off on those decisions. She had a leadership role in the campaign when the decision was made to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. Does she agree that those decisions are part of the so-called legacy of Dalton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered that question over and over and over again. I have said that there were decisions made that I had nothing to do with. There were fundamental decisions made that I believe were not the right decisions. I have said that. I have appeared before committee, and I have said that.

I have worked, since I came into this office, to make sure that all of the information that has been asked for has been provided. The committee has had hundreds of thousands of pages of documents. The committee knows that they have the capacity to continue to ask people to come before them. We opened up the process, and we have moved to change the rules around the siting of energy infrastructure, which was at the root of this challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

ary.

**Ms.** Andrea Horwath: How signing a cabinet document has nothing to do with the gas plant scandal is beyond me, but maybe this Premier can justify it.

Last February, the Premier said the following about Dalton McGuinty: "I'm proud to have been part of his government." The Premier has been at pains lately to avoid even saying the name Dalton McGuinty, despite serving as a key part of his team for 10 years. He's now referred to as "the former Premier."

Can the Premier even say the words "Dalton Mc-Guinty," or does she think avoiding that name magically absolves her of all responsibility for the gas plant

scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am very proud to have been part of a government that undid the real destruction that had been in place under the previous government. I got involved in provincial politics because there was a government in place in this province from 1995 to 2003 that had no respect for our public institutions, that undermined labour and that really changed the rules in terms of the supports for the citizens of this province. That's why I got involved in provincial politics, and the work that we have done is work that I am proud of.

Were there decisions made that I think should have been different? Absolutely. I have said that repeatedly. I have taken responsibility and I have apologized for decisions that were made, but we are moving forward. I think the leader of the third party—it would be a very helpful thing if she would talk to us about what, for example, her

energy policy is-

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

New question?

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the Premier. When did the Premier become aware that the Premier's office computers had been wiped clean?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is an OPP investigation going on; I am not going to comment on an ongoing investigation. As I have said, the allegations that have been made as a result of that investigation are allegations against someone who did not work in my office.

What we are doing on this side of the House is we are letting that investigation go on, and we are very, very focused on putting in place the policies and the investments to make sure that we have prosperity in the future

and that there's security for the people in this province. That is what we are going to embed in our budget that we will be bringing forward. It would be very, very helpful if the leader of third party wanted to engage in any of those policy discussions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? Ms. Andrea Horwath: It would be helpful if the Pre-

mier answered my question, Speaker.

Long after the Premier took charge of the Liberal Party, her government was dismissing concerns about key Liberal staff who said quite proudly that they routinely deleted emails.

Now we know that unauthorized individuals were roaming the halls tampering with staff computers, yet the Premier still claims she is as shocked as anyone else. Can the Premier tell us how she can possibly not have known

that this was happening?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reason we are having this conversation, the reason that the leader of the third party is asking these questions, is because we opened up the process. I came into this office and I said, "We are going to ask"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Order. Start the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

**Hon.** Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I was very clear when I came into this office that those questions needed to be asked and answered, and so that is what has happened. We will continue to co-operate, obviously. There's an investigation going on; we will let that go on.

But we are very focused on making sure that we have a path forward to opportunity and security, whether it's in education or whether it's in health care. I would be happy to talk with any of the members on the other side of the House about any of those issues any time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-

ary?

**Ms.** Andrea Horwath: This Liberal Premier can try to rewrite history as much as she wants, but there's something called contempt that we all know occurred, and you can't erase that from the history books.

Ontarians want to see a government that is accountable to the people who are stuck paying the bill for government spending. The Premier can try to rewrite history, but people haven't forgotten that she was a key part of the team that steered us directly into this mess, and all of the ducking, all of the dodging and all of the denials in the world are not going to change that.

The Premier can start by answering some basic questions like: When exactly did she become aware the Premier's office computers had potentially been wiped

clean?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** There is an entirely independent police investigation going on so I am not going to comment on that investigation.

1100

What I am going to say is that we made it clear that there were changes that needed to be made. We have worked to make those changes. First of all, we opened up the process around the questions around the relocation of the gas plants. We opened up the scope of the committee. We've changed the rules around the siting of energy infrastructure. We've changed the rules around the retention of documents. We've made those changes in consultation with people like the Information and Privacy Commissioner. That is work that we have done in order to make sure that these kinds of questions do not arise again, because the decisions that are made will be made differently.

I'm very proud of that work. I'm also proud of the work that we're doing to bring forward a budget that is going to work to ensure security-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock for a second.

Earlier, I had mentioned that the member from Huron-Bruce should come to order. I did not mean to say Huron-Bruce; I apologize. I meant to say Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who is working on his second one.

New question.

#### SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome all the people who are associated with the College of Trades and all the different tradespeople who are here today for this debate, and my friend David Tsubouchi as well. Thank you, David.

My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, your latest tax grab and boondoggle, the Ontario College of Trades, is one year old today. As a communications and consultation nightmare, I don't think anything is more damaging than the fact that they are well on their way to the compulsory certification of the carpentry trade.

I have asked you in this House to intervene on this decision, and you have ignored me. Now the largest labourers' union, LIUNA—and I understand the member from Essex is actually a member of LIUNA—has asked that you put a moratorium on any compulsory certification of construction trades.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: If you're a proud member, you should have voted with me the other day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your time is up. Don't talk to him; talk to me. Sit down. Your time is up.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Similar to his leader, the member seems to not be able to ask a question or make a comment on the College of Trades without tonnes of hyperbole, without information that's generally not correct. If you listened to the member

in the last couple of weeks, he was saying 85,000 apprentices would be out of work April 8. Well, guess what? It's April 8. There are no apprentices out of work, sir. You were dead wrong. Your credibility is absolutely shot when it comes to these issues.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I look forward to working with the Ontario College of Trades, as we all do. Some of the issues they're going to be dealing with are very challenging. They are going to have to take a very thoughtful approach to these decisions. I'm very confident that they will.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I took too long with that first question, but the supplementary—I know that Jack Oliveira, the business manager of Local 183 from LIUNA, says, "This will drive up costs and could puts thousands of our members out of work."

People are lining up fighting this. Now federal minister Jason Kenney has come out swinging against this idiotic proposal. Minister Kenney says that a disastrous decision like this warrants national attention.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, I'm trying to get quiet over here, and you're not helping. Everyone should be able to put a question and answer a question uninterrupted.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister Kenney says, "There is a growing concern that while most provinces in Canada are looking at ways to remove barriers to entering the skilled trades, Ontario is heading in the opposite direction-the wrong direction."

I ask you once again, Minister, to please immediately order a moratorium on any new compulsory certification of trades. Will you do that, Minister?

Interiections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: What is it about the arrogance of PC politicians to think that politicians know more about skilled trades than skilled tradespeople themselves? We've seen how that's worked the last 20 years. The member wants to get rid of the College of Trades just when it's getting up and running. For some reason, he thinks that skilled tradespeople aren't capable of making these important decisions affecting their professions. We think differently, Mr. Speaker. We have confidence in skilled tradespeople that they will work in the spirit of self-governance. We do not want to do what he wants to do. He wants to bring that administration back into government. That's what I call big government tax-andspend politics, something that I find surprising coming from the member opposite. We believe that the people in the skilled trades will manage these issues very thoughtfully.

#### **POWER PLANTS**

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** To the Premier: Has the Premier talked to Christy Clark since New Democrats wrote a letter to her so we could ensure that Laura Miller, former deputy chief of staff, could appear at the justice committee?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We had a chance to deal with this issue yesterday. The fact of the matter is that the justice committee—which the Premier asked, when she became Premier, be given very broad scope and extremely, I would say, broad powers, in the sense that they can sit at the call of the Chair and they can direct their proceedings as they see fit. They have the power and the authority to invite who they see fit to come and be witnesses. Certainly, we respect the work of the committee, and we respect the fact that they have that opportunity to call who they see fit for witnesses as they undertake this work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I'm glad the government respects the work of the committee. I'm just asking that they be helpful. If the Premier hasn't done it already, when will she or her staff be reaching out to the BC Liberals to ensure that Laura Miller can appear at the justice committee to give testimony?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the justice committee has the authority to invite witnesses to come forward. As any committee of this House, there are steps they can take if they feel that they're not getting co-operation from witnesses. Let's leave that with the justice committee.

We've all had our share of frustrations. As members know, earlier in this session there was a lot of frustration on our side because we wanted to hear from some of the candidates in the opposition parties: the candidates who went into the last election making the exact same promise that the government made about the cancellation of the gas plants. We heard it from the PCs and we heard it from the NDP: that if they were elected, they would undertake the exact same cancellation that we did. So there has been some frustration on this side of the House, but again, let's leave this with the committee.

#### SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. For months, we've seen article after article talking about an alleged trades tax being forced on skilled tradespeople across Ontario by the College of Trades. We've watched anti-college groups surface, like Stop the Trades Tax Coalition. We've heard accusations, even today, from the opposition that the college is trying to put people out of work. Most recently, we are hearing allegations that the govern-

ment is forcing compulsory certification on voluntary trades.

People are overwhelmed and confused by all this negative rhetoric around the College of Trades and want some answers. Through you, Speaker: Will the minister explain to the House whether there is any truth to these accusations?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for asking such a direct question, because I think we have to be very, very clear here. The membership fee that the College of Trades is putting forward is the lowest membership fee of all the regulatory bodies across this province. What is it doing? It's paying for the College of Trades to ensure that those hard-working skilled tradespeople who go to school, who take an apprenticeship, who get their certificate of qualifications, are protected from the underground economy. That's important to those young people. We want to build a skilled trades sector that's welcoming of young people and gives them a career for life. That's one of the ways we're going to do that.

There are a number of issues that the member raised that are very, very important. Let's be very, very clear as well. The Ontario College—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'm going to have to answer that in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Think so? Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer and for standing up for Ontario's skilled workers. I know that people will be glad to hear that the province is standing up for skilled tradespeople, especially when the party opposite is not. I look forward to continuing to help inform them on how they can become part of that process, unlike those who simply want to fight against it.

We've heard a lot today about the myths surrounding the college. Given that today is the one-year anniversary of the creation of the college, can the minister speak further on the important work of the College of Trades and what they are doing to help support skilled workers in Ontario?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: I certainly can and I look forward to doing that, but I want to respond a little bit to the last part of her first question, Speaker. Let's be very, very clear: The Ontario College of Trades and the government of Ontario are not moving forward with compulsory certification for any trades. That's not something that we have the power to do. That's something that ought to be put through a proper process, which is what the Ontario College of Trades is there to do. I think it's important that that's clarified.

Over the last year, what the College of Trades has been able to do is provide enhanced consumer protection so that when our grandmothers and mothers are going to the mechanic to get their brakes fixed, they know that a certified mechanic is there to fix their brakes. They are providing a form of self-governance for the trades so the trades can make these decisions themselves. They're en-

suring that young people have access to the trades, and promoting the skilled trades, and they're protecting our hard-working skilled tradespeople to ensure that the qualifications they have are respected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Earlier, I asked the member from Oxford to withdraw. I was mistaken and I apologize to the member. If any other member wishes to stand to withdraw, I will accept that.

Mr. Steve Clark: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us why Brianna Ames's computer was wiped despite the fact she did not work in the Premier's office until she began working for the Premier herself?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, there is an entirely independent investigation going on. I am not going to comment on that investigation. I think the member opposite knows that that is the case. I have answered questions, we have provided documentation, we have opened up the process, but the investigation that's going on is independent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, there is an investigation also being done by the OPP today, and they're probably going to be bringing more people forward. I'm wondering if the Premier can tell us if any members of her transition team, any members of her current staff or any members of her cabinet are to be contacted as a result of an Ottawa Citizen story by the OPP on this ongoing investigation. Could she please explain to the House if that's the case?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, I can't. I can't tell the Leader of the Opposition what the OPP investigation is going to do over the next period of time because it is an independent investigation. It is independent from government.

I heard of the allegations on March 27. The allegations are against the former chief of staff of the former Premier. It has nothing to do with the staff member who you mentioned. The fact is that I believe it really is unfair for the member opposite to drag staff members' names in here when there is an independent investigation going on. I think that all of us should let that investigation run its course.

#### PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. The Standing Committee on General Government is currently reviewing the Pan/Parapan Am Games. This review was struck in order to get to the bottom of all costs and to bring together all the fragmented pieces in the hope of clarifying responsibility and costs for the games as a whole. Yet the work of the committee members has been restricted from investigating the full scope of the games and something as fundamental as security.

Speaker, does this Premier agree that the scope of the committee should be so restricted?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the honourable member needs to be very careful. The work that is being undertaken by the committee is based on a motion that was passed by all members of the committee on November 4, which outlines the framework on which the committee will work.

I understand that the Chair of the committee made an independent ruling. That is a ruling by the Chair that has nothing to do with any party in this House. It is the Chair looking at procedural work that has gone forward. Mr. Speaker, I think he should be very careful. The committee's work, which is being undertaken, as I say, is based on the determination of the committee.

At the same time, I would remind the member that there are other committees of this Legislature that are looking at the Pan Am issue, including the public accounts committee, which has asked the Auditor General specifically to look into the security matters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: "Obstruction" is a wonderful word.

In spite of the restrictions, we found out yesterday that the \$239 million earmarked for security is only an estimate. In other words, we have no guarantee that the costs will not continue to skyrocket, nor that we'll get the best value for the security costs. After question period today, I'll be moving a unanimous consent motion that will finally allow the committee to do their work and look at the whole picture.

Will this Premier show that she really wants transparency, accountability, and clarity, and say now that she will support this motion?

Hon. John Milloy: These are the most open and transparent multi-sport games ever. The government brought the games organizing committee of TO2015 under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I know that the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games is holding regular briefings for the media and interested members of the public. We have been forthcoming to the various committees. As I say, the public accounts committee is specifically looking into the security issue.

In terms of member's unanimous consent motion that he has put forward, I think he would agree that this is a matter that should be dealt with by House leaders, so that we don't interfere in what's going on in committees through a UC motion on the floor of the House. The committee's mandate was confirmed by the committee on November 4. There are a number of committees looking into this matter and we have been very, very open and transparent.

#### **CONSIDERATION OF BILL 21**

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail, the Honourable Kevin Flynn, mais avec votre permission, monsieur le Président, en même temps je

voudrais féliciter le D^r Philippe Couillard, premier ministre élu du Québec.

Minister, yesterday Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act, was debated in the Legislature. I spoke on behalf of my constituents, but we were somewhat dismayed to witness the opposition put up speaker after speaker, possibly to drag out the clock. It's a bill that all parties support, a bill about compassion, and yet every day the bill is stalled further.

Ontarians with a family member who has a serious medical condition are missing out on the time they may be able to spend with their loved ones: critically ill children; individuals who have federal funding struggle financially, unable to access it as a provincial worker; and families whose children in fact have been murdered or have gone missing—all of these individuals are affected. To the minister: What can we collectively do as members to make sure this legislation passes quickly?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the fine member from Etobicoke North for that question. Our government recognizes the importance of giving families the time to be with their loved ones and the other positive effects that this bill can have on the lives of everyday Ontarians. That's why, on this side of the House, we're doing everything we can to move this bill through the Legislature. But with respect, the opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 21.

Listen to this: This bill has been in the House for over a year—14 different days, 22 hours of debate and 75 speakers. Listening to debate, it's been clear that the majority of members in this House support this bill. This signals that there's no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill and their only goal is to delay. I'm calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling. Help us pass this legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Minister, as you said, we certainly respect all members' democratic right to speak on behalf of their constituents. That's their right as well as their duty. But a bill that's being delayed, dragged out and filibustered, that has a direct impact on the lives of many Ontarians, including residents in my own riding of Etobicoke North—that is not, I think, the best path forward.

We had representatives from the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Alzheimer Society of Ontario, Service Employees International Union, Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Home Care Association, all of whom are on record as wanting this bill passed expeditiously. Yet we still watch an opposition talk about the million jobs plan and other unrelated bills, while engaging in what can be charitably called debate.

Can the minister please inform this chamber what has been the progress on this bill to date?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the fine member from Etobicoke North for that question. As

I mentioned in the last response, the opposition has had ample time during second reading to discuss any possible concerns or amendments they may have. Again, the bill has been in the House for over a year—14 different days, 22 hours of debate and 75 speakers. We've had two full days of committee where there were public hearings and amendments were made.

1120

This is not the time to debate new amendments to the bill. I believe it's disrespectful to everyone that could be helped in the province of Ontario by the passage of this legislation for the opposition to continue this irresponsible filibustering.

When we voted on this as a whole in committee, Bill 21 received all-party support and it was asked to be reported back to the House for third reading. It's time to stop using this important bill that could help people to play politics. Let's get the bill passed. We need the opposition to start showing their support for this.

#### POWER PLANTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. People of Wellington–Halton Hills who are closely watching what's happening in this Legislature no doubt were startled to read, in the Toronto Star on March 28, no less than eight pages on the gas plant scandal, including a bombshell allegation that the former Premier's chief of staff might face criminal charges for arranging the deletion of internal government emails relating to the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants.

The Toronto Star reported that an outside person was given access to 24 computers in the Premier's office during the transition between the McGuinty and Wynne Liberal governments, just over one year ago. This is what was in the Toronto Star.

With all that has happened on this file and the recent Toronto Star disclosures, how on earth does the Premier expect the people of Ontario to give her the benefit of the doubt?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I appreciate the fact that the honourable member was quoting from the media. I'd like to just remind him what the media reviews have been about the performance of his party and, in particular, his leader on this file.

From the Toronto Star, the publication that he quoted: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show"—April 1, 2014. Another quote from the same date: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's premiership."

Ottawa Citizen, April 1: The PCs "asked repeatedly whether Wynne's computer was among those wiped,

which makes little sense: the police are crystal clear that they're interested in computers in McGuinty's office, where Wynne did not work."

A Globe and Mail editorial, April 1, 2014: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is on thin legal ice." A Globe and Mail editorial, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition claimed "that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Back to the Premier: The government is quick to point out that the possible criminal breach of trust took place before the member for Don Valley West was sworn in as Premier. By taking this approach, they throw their former leader, Mr. McGuinty, unceremoniously under the proverbial bus. The government would also want us to overlook the fact that the day that the member for Don Valley West was elected leader of the Liberal Party, in January 2013, she became the incoming Premier. As incoming Premier, the power and authority and trust inherent in that high office immediately began to shift to her. She can hardly claim that she has no responsibility for the transition period while blaming everything on the predecessor whose leadership she was proud to endorse through three provincial elections. How in good conscience can she continue to blame all this on Dalton McGuinty?

**Hon. John Milloy:** We had the OPP appear in front of the committee, and they told us two things. First of all, this is directed towards the former Premier's chief of staff. The second is that MPPs should stay out of this police investigation.

As I said yesterday, I am pleased with and proud of the fact that the Premier is seeking legal advice in this matter. We look to the opposition to apologize and retract their statements. As I said, their critic, the member from Nepean–Carleton, has experience in it. I quoted yesterday from this news release on January 31 from the member from Nepean–Carleton, who said she was sorry for the negative perception that may have been created in terms of her allegations against Maureen Murphy-Makin or Rick Morgan "for wrongfully implicating them in an erroneous story in January 2004 revolving around the decision by former PC leader Peter MacKay not to seek the leadership of the new Conservative Party of Canada." She apologized then—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

#### ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last week, the government announced that it was keeping Ontario Northland public. But at the same time, in the same announcement, it said it was selling Ontera, the communications arm of the ONTC, the one part of the ONTC that actually isn't costing the government any money.

The sale to Bell Aliant is for \$6 million, but the fibre optic ring alone, that Ontario owns, is worth \$23 million. On top of that, it will cost the government an estimated \$60 million to transfer Ontera to Bell Aliant, and 100 jobs will be lost.

Why does this government keep signing bad deals and

letting Ontarians pay the tab?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I was very pleased to be in North Bay last week to announce, after a year of very hard and thoughtful work by the ministerial advisory committee, and a very thorough internal examination of a number of reports—including a management/union options report—that indeed the province is keeping the ONTC motor coach bus division; the Polar Bear Express; rail freight; and refurbishment services in public hands, something that would not have happened a year ago without the great work of the ministerial advisory committee.

We are making new strategic investments, as the member knows: \$6.2 million to purchase 11 new accessible motor coaches for the bus line, and \$17 million for the refurbishment services.

I look forward to speaking to the one line that we did make a different decision on, in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines: Ontera is an integral part of the ONTC; it's part of the package. This government is paying a private corporation to take over a publicly owned business. This deal will cost jobs in northern Ontario, and it begs the question: Is this government really long-term committed to the ONTC, or is it just selling it off or dismantling it bit by bit?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I really think the member might want to be careful about undermining the very good work of the ministerial advisory committee. Obviously, Mayor Al McDonald in North Bay; Alan Spacek, the president of FONOM; Mayor Nina Wallace of Englehart; and Mayor Laughren of Timmins worked very, very hard. Indeed, the decision to keep those four

lines in public hands was important.

What needs to be said about the decision on Ontera was that it was a difficult decision for us to make—or certainly for me, as the minister, to make—but I think there have been tremendous changes in the telecommunications industry. I think it ultimately came down to the fact that, indeed, I don't think it really makes sense anymore for a telecommunications company that is in direct competition with the private sector to continue to be supported by the government.

The proceeds from the sale are indeed \$6 million in cash and \$10 million in fibre optic lines. What you're not mentioning is that Bell Aliant will be providing \$15.1 million in capital investment, which we will match.

The sale is an essential part of-

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand; you sit.

The member from Vaughan: new question.

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, eight out of 10 citizens own some type of mobile device in Ontario today. In my own community of Vaughan, I've heard from many residents who have issues with their cellphone contracts. Many find the language used in these contracts difficult to understand. They also have concerns about unexpected additional charges to their monthly bills, and large cancellations fees if they try to get out of a contract. That is why I was delighted to hear that the new Wireless Services Agreements Act came into effect at the beginning of April 2014.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House regarding how this act will provide better protection for consumers in Vaughan and across Ontario?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the member from Vaughan for this question. I'm very pleased to talk about the Wireless Services Agreements Act now in force in Ontario. I'd also like to give a shout-out to the Minister of Natural Resources, the MPP from Sault Ste. Marie, for all of his tireless work on this before I picked up the file. Thank you so much.

As noted by the member from Vaughan, there has been an explosion in the use of wireless devices. However, unfortunately, there has also been an explosion in complaints about contracts for wireless services. We understood this issue, and we led the way for better consumer protection in Ontario.

Because of our swift action, consumers in Ontario can now expect clear information and fewer surprises when they enter a cellphone and wireless service contract. As of April 1 of this year, the requirements under this act must be applied to all new contracts. Now people can expect plain contracts, a clear outline of fees charged and a cap on cancellation fees.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the minister and echo her comments regarding the current Minister of Natural Resources' long-standing advocacy on this particular issue.

I am pleased to hear that consumers in Ontario will now be better protected under this act. I know many in my community of Vaughan will feel more confident entering into contracts for their wireless devices. Confident consumers result in a much stronger marketplace, and this leads to a stronger economy.

I want to ensure that residents in my community who use their mobile devices for their jobs and to stay connected with their families at home are also protected by this act. Speaker, through you to the minister: Are there options available to consumers who believe that their contract was not properly made or for those who feel that they are paying for services they did not contract for?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, there are provisions to address the concerns the member has raised. Under our new law, service providers who do not comply with the

rules must provide consumers who cancel their contracts a full refund for up to a year of service. If a provider charges for services after a contract is improperly amended, Ontario consumers are entitled to get that money back.

Most importantly, we have enshrined the rights of consumers—and I would add, strong enforcement provisions as well—when dealing with a wireless service contract. We have legislation, not a code. This ensures consumers have a law they can refer to in utilizing and dealing with service providers.

Protecting consumers and helping people in their everyday life is part of our government's economic plan, which is creating jobs for today and tomorrow. Our plan is focused on Ontario's greatest strengths: people and strategic partnerships. Our plan is working.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Todd Smith:** My question this morning is for the Premier. It's nice that she was able to join us for question period this morning.

I suppose, though, that when you're as deeply embroiled in scandal and have as many senior Liberals under OPP investigation as the Premier has, ducking the cameras and the hard questions here in question period is probably the only strategy she actually has left. You're hiding behind lawyers, you've ducked question period. To me, to the NDP and to the majority of people in Ontario, you're clearly a government that's on the run.

But my question is this: How much time have you spent, since you were on the taxpayers' dime, consulting your lawyers when you actually should have been doing the job of Premier of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I would ask him to join me any day, any week, and follow me to the events I go to, to the people I connect with. I start my run at about 6 o'clock in the morning. I'm happy to have you there. I usually finish my last meeting with folks around 10 o'clock, and in between is packed.

I would be happy to have any of the members opposite come with me through my day.

Interiections

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Supplementary?

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Thank you very much for the invitation, Premier. There was nobody at your event yesterday, so I can understand why you would like to have company there.

I know the Premier doesn't like being compared to Richard Nixon. The only thing she's missing, actually, is that big green helicopter on the south lawn here at Queen's Park. She employed one of the central figures in the gas plant scandal only until his name appeared in the press. Many McGuinty staffers have actually been promoted under her watch, but she wants us all to believe that she knew nothing, and these are just coincidences. And if you don't agree with what she says, then you get served by the law firm of Dewey, Cheatem and Howe.

Premier, you're just not up to the job. You're more interested in complaining to lawyers than making hard decisions. We should be creating jobs and balancing the books in Ontario. How many other taxpayer resources are you using for your personal legal drama that's playing out here—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. *Interjections*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't hurt to apologize and retract. As I said—I got cut off earlier—let me tell you about a company or an organization, bluedraft.com. It was a blog that was run in part by the member from Nepean—Carleton. She had to put forward this statement on January 31, 2005:

"The operators of www.bluedraft.com, Ms. Lisa MacLeod"—of course, the member from Nepean-Carleton—"and Chris Froggatt, would like to sincerely apologize to Maureen Murphy-Makin and Rick Morgan for wrongfully implicating them in an erroneous story in January 2004 revolving around the decision by former PC leader Peter MacKay not to seek the leadership of the new Conservative Party of Canada. We are sorry for the negative perception that may have been created since then and that may have harmed the solid reputation and high integrity of both Ms. Murphy-Makin and Mr. Morgan. We admit that our sources were not reliable and proper accuracy"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Speaker, Scarborough hospitals have been struggling to deal with funding shortfalls, as well as outdated and overcrowded facilities. They considered a merger but had to back off because of impacts on patient care, thanks to a lack of funding from this government.

Hospital management, physicians, staff and patients continue to tell this government how desperately their hospitals are in need of repairs and upgrades. But now, instead of helping, Liberal MPPs in the Scarborough area are blaming the hospitals.

Will this government stop pointing fingers and tell the people of Scarborough what is their plan to fix their welldocumented problems?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I can tell you that I have met with my colleagues from Scarborough on a number of

occasions, because they are working together to improve health care in Scarborough for the people of Scarborough and Durham.

I'm not sure where the member opposite is getting her information, but I can assure you that the hospitals and the LHIN, in working with our MPPs, are determined to improve care for people in Scarborough today and in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We know that in Scarborough, hospital infrastructures are falling apart, while emergency rooms are grossly undersized for the ever-growing number of patients that they serve. The Scarborough community feels that they are being given second-class treatment as health resources are being funnelled to other areas of Toronto. Now that Liberal MPPs have started to point their fingers at the hospitals as the cause of the problem, it seems like any hope of improvement will once again be lost.

Will this government tell the people of Scarborough whether they are prepared to stop playing games, prioritize patient care and fix the problem with the hospital infrastructure in Scarborough?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be more than happy to sit down with the member, as we have done before on other issues, to actually go through what is happening in Scarborough, because the LHIN and the hospitals are having productive conversations about how to respond to what is admittedly a need in Scarborough.

Speaker, the MPPs—I really have to stress this—from Scarborough and Durham have been working very hard to find positive, constructive solutions that will mean better care for people in that area of the province.

#### **HYDRO RATES**

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Creating jobs and retaining jobs is one of our government's highest priorities. In order to do so, we need to make Ontario a good place to invest for industrial companies.

Access to reliable electricity infrastructure, I understand, is the highest priority for large industrial electricity consumers, according to the Manufacturing Competitiveness Committee of the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council.

1140

Over the last 10 years, our government has made unprecedented investments in electricity transmission, distribution and generation. As a result, we now have clean, reliable and affordable systems. Now that Ontario can provide reliable electricity, energy costs are one of the next inputs that the industrial companies will need to factor in when considering whether to expand and create facilities in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell this House how we can help Ontario's companies?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** First of all, I thank the member from York South–Weston for the question. The Industrial

Electricity Incentive Program is helping industrial companies in Ontario grow and create jobs. Under this new program, eligible companies qualify for some of the lowest electricity rates in North America if they expand an existing facility or build a new one in the province.

Last week in Pembroke, I announced that Pembroke MDF's paperboard plant was reopening using this program, creating 140 direct jobs plus many indirect jobs. In Whitby, Atlantic Packaging is upgrading their mill and creating 80 jobs using the IEI Program. And in the member's riding of York South—Weston, the IEI Program is helping Irving Tissue modernize and increase production capacity at their tissue mill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Helping industrial companies grow and compete in the global marketplace is an important part of our government's plan to create and support jobs for the citizens of Ontario.

It is excellent news that Irving Tissue, one of the largest employers in my community, is expanding and modernizing their tissue mill. I understand that in addition to programs like the Industrial Electricity Incentive, Ontario's updated long-term energy plan also reduces electricity costs for typical large industrial consumers by \$3 million over the next five years, and by \$11 million over the next 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he share with this House how the IEI Program provides additional benefit, and how many jobs phase 2 of the program has helped create across the province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, this is indeed good news for job creation. Detour Gold says that the program will save them \$20 million in 2014 while they expand what is expected to be one of the largest gold mines in Canada. ASW Steel in Welland is creating 45 new jobs. Goldcorp is expanding the Musselwhite mine in Red Lake. And Resolute Canada will open a new sawmill manufacturing facility in Atikokan.

Across the province, more than 350 direct jobs in the mining, steel, and pulp and paper sectors are being created from projects accepted into this new program. In addition to creating jobs, the program benefits the electricity system by helping the province better manage its supply situation. Because the IEI Program is designed to take advantage of existing generating capacity, it will not have an impact on the costs for current electricity consumers, and it will take some of the steam out of the opposition.

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to expand the scope of the review of the TO2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games in the Standing Committee on General Government to ensure that every aspect of the games, including security, is able to be fully addressed during committee hearings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your page, please, to get this right.

Mr. Miller is seeking unanimous consent to expand the scope of the review of the TO2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games in the Standing Committee on General Government to ensure that every aspect of the games, including security, is able to be fully addressed during committee hearings. Do we agree? I heard a no.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: With the House's indulgence, I just want to introduce a long-time councillor in the township of Elizabethtown-Kitley and a wonderful director of the OFA in Leeds county, Eleanor Renaud.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

#### DEFERRED VOTES

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats, please.

On April 7, Ms. Sandals moved third reading of Bill 122. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Albanese, Laura Armstrong, Teresa J. Balkissoon, Bas Berardinetti, Lorenzo Bisson, Gilles Bradley, James J. Campbell, Sarah Cansfield, Donna H. Chan, Michael Chiarelli, Bob Colle, Mike Coteau, Michael Crack, Grant Damerla, Dipika Del Duca, Steven Delaney, Bob Dickson, Joe DiNovo, Cheri Duguid, Brad Fife, Catherine

Flynn, Kevin Daniel Forster, Cindy Gates, Wayne Gerretsen, John Gélinas, France Gravelle, Michael Hatfield, Percy Horwath, Andrea Hoskins, Eric Hunter, Mitzie Jaczek, Helena Kwinter, Monte Leal, Jeff MacCharles, Tracy Mangat, Amrit Mantha, Michael Marchese, Rosario Matthews, Deborah Mauro, Bill McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil Meilleur, Madeleine Miller, Paul Milloy, John Moridi, Reza Murray, Glen R. Natyshak, Taras Orazietti, David Piruzza, Teresa Prue, Michael Qaadri, Shafiq Sandals, Liz Sattler, Peggy Sergio, Mario Tabuns, Peter Taylor, Monique Vanthof, John Wong, Soo Wynne, Kathleen O. **The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted Bailey, Robert Barrett, Toby Chudleigh, Ted Clark, Steve Dunlop, Garfield Elliott, Christine Fedell, Victor Hardeman, Ernie Harris, Michael Hillier, Randy Holyday, Douglas C. Hudak, Tim Jones, Sylvia Klees, Frank Leone, Rob MacLaren, Jack Martow, Gila McDonell, Jim McKenna, Jane McNaughton, Monte Miller, Norm Munro, Julia O'Toole, John Ouellette, Jerry J. Pettapiece, Randy Scott, Laurie Smith, Todd Thompson, Lisa M. Walker, Bill Wilson, Jim Yakabuski, John Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 59; the nays are 34.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### TWEED TRIBUTE TO ELVIS FESTIVAL

**Mr. Todd Smith:** You know, Elvis has not left the building. He has just moved to Tweed. That's because every August for the last three years, the best Elvis performers in North America have made their way to the Comfort Country town on the edge of Stoco Lake to put on their Blue Suede Shoes, clear their Suspicious Minds and get All Shook Up.

The Elvis festival has become a staple of the tourism calendar in the area and, last year alone, generated \$400,000 in economic tourism activity for Tweed. Festivals and Events Ontario has recognized Tweed's Elvis festival as one of the top 100 events in the province.

For the past three years, it is an event that has only been possible because of the tireless and dedicated organizers in the community who have been able to complete the paperwork and get a small Celebrate Ontario grant that enables the festival to continue.

However, as with other festivals that are in ridings that happen to have not voted for government members, this year the festival won't be receiving funding, in spite of the previous accolades that Tourism Ontario has lavished on it. All the evidence shows us that very few festivals are more worthy than this one for what funding it does receive. Attempts so far to regain the funding haven't borne fruit.

The fact is, It's Now or Never for Elvis in Tweed. This is a community that feels it Got Stung with all the Return to Sender notices that the government has been putting on their Celebrate Ontario applications.

I call on this government to stop Shoppin' Around because you won't find a more deserving community or festival than Tweed's August Elvis festival. I'm asking the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport: Don't Be Cruel. Let's ensure that Elvis is in Tweed this summer. Thank you. Thank you very much.

#### FORT ERIE RACE TRACK

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** A few months ago, I went door to door across my riding of Niagara Falls, and I talked to many residents who had lost their jobs. Many were from the Fort Erie Race Track.

In Fort Erie, I saw first-hand that not only stores were closed down, but entire malls were closed. The residents of Fort Erie saw 1,000 jobs threatened when the slots were ripped out of the Fort Erie Race Track, and the community never stopped fighting to keep the track open and keep the 1,000 jobs in the community.

With Niagara having one of the highest unemployment rates in Ontario, it was important for all of Niagara that the track stay open. Together with the Fort Erie community; the mayor, Doug Martin; the town council; and Jim Thibert and the Fort Erie Live Racing group, we pressured this government to keep the 116-year-old track open, which just happens to be one of the most beautiful racetracks in North America.

I was in Fort Erie on Saturday and had breakfast at a new restaurant that opened just two weeks ago called Breakfast Café. I spoke with the owner, Rose, who said how important it was to hear that the racetrack was staying open, and that the jobs that go with it will help her business.

The community is excited about securing a racing season for 2014, 2015 and 2016. It's great news for the 1,000 jobs that depend on the track and for the entire Fort Erie community as it pertains to the overall health of the local economy.

Speaker, we are pleased to see that the horsemen are back at the track. The employees are going back to work. What we need now is a long-term plan to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open permanently and protect the jobs that go with it.

#### KLEINBURG EVENTMAKERS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As I'm fond of saying repeatedly when I have the chance to stand in this place, Vaughan is a truly remarkable place in which to live, work and raise a family. We are a thriving region, home to some of the hardest-working people in Ontario, and we're committed to ensuring the best possible future for those living in our community.

Just last week, I was truly impressed to see a local organization known as the Kleinburg Eventmakers

provide a donation in support of the future of Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital.

Under the leadership of my good friends Frank and Arpi Greco, Richard Lorello, Tracey Kent and Carolyn Myers, this organization continues to make a positive contribution to my community. They're responsible for organizing events like the annual Zombie Walk, the Pumpkinfest and one of my personal favourites, the annual holiday tree-lighting ceremony. These are events that truly bring us together and help us create and support a very strong and vibrant sense of community spirit in Kleinburg.

Their donation to the hospital is proof positive that they have great affection for their community because they've proven it by providing support to one of Vaughan's most important projects.

Speaker, I want to take this opportunity in the Legislature to sincerely thank the Kleinburg Eventmakers for their hard work and their ongoing dedication to my community.

#### HOME HARDWARE STORES LTD.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is my honour to rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of Home Hardware Stores Ltd. I would like to congratulate president and CEO Paul Straus, incoming president Terry Davis, and the 1,000 dealer-owners from coast to coast to coast on their success as a Canadian-owned leading retailer for hardware, lumber, building supplies and furniture.

Home Hardware has truly demonstrated what it means to be the "Home of the Handyman," and founder Walter Hachborn should be proud of how his idea has grown over the past 50 years.

Fittingly, our family business is almost 70 years old. I would also like to recognize my parents, Gary and Susan McNaughton, our family, my brother, Mike, and our team of employees. We're very proud to have been part of the Home Hardware family since 1980.

On this important anniversary, we're thankful to have a uniquely Canadian hardware store that serves customers well and takes an active role in our local communities—hopefully for many years to come.

I would like to offer congratulations to Home Hardware Stores Ltd. for their 50 years of outstanding service to our communities across Canada. Thank you, congratulations, and, of course, "Help is close to home."

#### **HYDRO RATES**

Ms. Sarah Campbell: On Friday, I participated in the province-wide day of action against out-of-control hydro rates in Ontario. In Red Lake alone, more than three dozen people took time from their busy lives to demonstrate against ever-escalating and increasingly unaffordable hydro rates. At the event was a cross-section of the community, including all ages and incomes. But despite their different circumstances, they all shared one chal-

lenge, which is keeping up with their sky-high hydro

One participant told me that after months of barely scraping by, she examined just how her costs have increased since she moved to northwestern Ontario from out of province six years ago. She said it was a real eye-opener, as absolutely everything has gone up, be it the price of food, property taxes, the price of gasoline and, most notably, her hydro bills. She said, "It's simply unaffordable to live here."

#### 1510

A recurring theme that I hear across the northwest is that the cost of living is so great in Ontario that people are literally being forced out of their homes and into other provinces. Speaker, this is shameful and unnecessary.

This government talks about the need for us to create jobs, but we are risking not being able to fill the jobs we've already got because people can't afford to live here

I am calling on the government to rein in these runaway bills today by:

- —stopping the \$1-billion annual subsidy of electricity exports;
- —reining in and capping executive pay at Hydro One;
- —reducing waste by merging Ontario's hydro agencies;
- —calling on the Auditor General to conduct an immediate review of all private power contracts; and
- —passing Bill 132, the bill I introduced to ban energy retailers in Ontario.

#### FINANCIAL LITERACY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased today to tell the House about a financial literacy workshop that I hosted in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt this past Saturday, in partnership with local students and the Toronto District School Board. The workshop was called Money Matters: Helping Students Improve Money Management and Entrepreneurship. This is the second time that I've hosted this workshop, which provides youth with the opportunity to network with business leaders, meet like-minded students from the Toronto area, and learn more about personal finances. They also had a chance to learn about summer youth entrepreneurship opportunities.

We had some outstanding guest speakers and judges at this event and had the great privilege to have the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment in attendance to deliver the keynote address.

I would also like to congratulate the four winners of this year's Make Your Pitch competition: Winnie Cho, Britney Huang, Zaheen Choudry and Sharon Xu.

Speaker, this workshop would not be possible without the help of dedicated youth leaders, speakers and judges. Their commitment demonstrates the importance of supporting young people so that their innovative ideas can flourish. It is imperative that we inspire our emerging entrepreneurs, starting as early as high school, and that we provide them with constant guidance and assistance through the various opportunities.

#### HOSPICE FUNDING

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I rise today to talk about the discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario.

I want to begin by congratulating the staff and many volunteers of Hospice Georgian Triangle in Collingwood. I was pleased to receive notification last week that the local hospice will receive \$540,000 per year in operational funding for Campbell House, a new six-bed residential facility.

While this is good news for the Collingwood hospice, which is in the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, Matthews House Hospice in Alliston, which is in the Central LHIN, is not receiving the same level of funding. In fact, Matthews House Hospice only receives \$37,840 per year, a fraction of the \$700,000 they spend in operational costs.

Mr. Speaker, the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN funds 21 hospice beds at \$90,000 each per year. The Central LHIN funds three, and these three beds are all the way in Richmond Hill, a 70-kilometre drive from Alliston. It's

simply not fair funding.

Matthews House Hospice's new residential facility in Alliston opened its doors last August and has already been used by 42 clients. Most of these people came from hospitals, saving the province 534 bed days of acute care. Matthews House has been told by their LHIN that LHINs do not fund operational costs, and yet hospices in Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen Sound and now Collingwood all receive operational funding from the province. This discrepancy in funding is wrong, and the government needs to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with this problem, to ensure that all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life hospice care.

#### NATALIE SPOONER

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to rise today to recognize Natalie Spooner, a young athlete from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, who attended Cedarbrae Collegiate, whom I met this weekend at Scarborough Village community centre, with her brother Doug and

parents, Peter and Ann-Marie Spooner.

Natalie has received much international recognition through her many accomplishments in the sport of hockey. She holds a silver medal from the International Ice Hockey Federation's 2008 under-18 Women's World Championship; a silver medal from the 2011 IIHF World Women's Championship; a gold medal from the 2012 IIHF World Women's Championship; the 2013-14 Clarkson Cup; and, most recently, Speaker, at 23, Natalie holds a gold medal in women's ice hockey from the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. For someone so young, these are incredible feats.

Natalie pursued hockey after her brothers started playing. In fact, she played on the boys' team with her brothers.

As a young woman, she has pursued a non-traditional career path. She remains an inspiration and a role model to the young girls and young women of this province and this country, including the young girls and young women of my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

Natalie is already using her celebrity status and was amongst the first to sign up as a volunteer for the Toronto 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games volunteer program kickoff yesterday. What a great young woman and an incredible

inspiration to all of us.

#### WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the driving conditions Ontarians have had to deal with on the provincial highways this past winter have, quite frankly, been disgraceful. I have had constituents contact me after nearly every snowfall to complain that they have never seen our provincial highways in such terrible shape.

Municipalities such as West Nipissing, Chisholm and Armour passed resolutions that resolve, "That the Premier of Ontario take the necessary steps to immediately restore the level of service for winter maintenance on

provincial highways."

They also want the Ministry of Transportation to undertake the evaluation and potential reclassification of all provincial highways to ensure adequate road maintenance and to ensure that contractors consistently maintain provincial highways to the standard that ensures continued public safety.

Thanks to a motion from my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, our caucus was successful in getting the Auditor General to investigate the reasons motorists in every corner of Ontario had to take their lives into their hands when they got behind the wheel on provincial highways this past winter. Ontarians deserve to have this situation fixed to ensure their families' safety on our roads.

For the third year, I say this cannot happen again next winter.

# STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### **EQUAL PAY DAY**

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Speaker, I will tell you that today I am sharing my time with the minister responsible for women's issues, the Honourable Teresa Piruzza.

It is an honour to rise today in the Legislature to recognize April 16 as Equal Pay Day with community groups from across Ontario.

I'd like to also introduce some of the guests in the gallery who have joined us on this auspicious occasion: Mary Cornish is with us, who is the chair of the Equal Pay Coalition; Emanuela Heyninck, the Pay Equity Commissioner; Gracie Lin and Joanna McDonald from the Pay Equity Commission; Heather McGregor is with us, executive director of the YWCA of Toronto; Nancy Hutchison is with us, secretary treasurer for the Ontario Federation of Labour; and Cathy Carroll is also here, from Service Employees International Union, Local 1. Speaker, please welcome them to Oueen's Park.

I want to acknowledge the advocates, the community leaders and those who are working to end wage discrimination every day, and that includes the leadership of Emanuela Heyninck, Ontario's Pay Equity Officer,

and the Pay Equity Office itself.

We recognize the critical role that women play in our economy, while reflecting on the sombre reality that women earn less on average than men. We must recommit ourselves to ending this discrimination and celebrating the amazing contributions that women make to our economy, while ensuring that the contributions of our daughters and our granddaughters are fully valued and recognized.

By acknowledging this day, Ontario joins others around the world in recognizing that while we've made significant progress, this inequality still exists and we

have much more work to do.

Women make up a central part of the workforce, the majority of post-secondary graduates, and a growing number of leaders in our economy and our society. Ontario's women are innovators, they're scientists, they're teachers, they're CEOs, and I'm incredibly proud to say today, they're the Premier of Ontario.

However, on average, women still do not make the same income as men, and this gap increases among racialized women and also those women who are living

with a disability.

As long as there is a wage gap, Ontario's economic engine is failing to fire on all cylinders. That's why we've asked the province's Pay Equity Commission to host a round table to discuss ways to address this gender wage gap in Ontario specifically.

1520

It was our government, under Premier Peterson, that passed the Pay Equity Act. Today it is still recognized as one of the most progressive pay equity statutes in the entire world.

In 2012, Speaker, we provided nearly \$1.5 million in funding to support women in the skilled trades. We've also launched the Second Career program and helped more than 38,000 women retrain for a new career.

We recognize that 58% of minimum wage earners are women. Our government is increasing the minimum wage to \$11 an hour on June 1. And we've introduced legislation that would, if passed, tie future annual minimum wage increases to Ontario's consumer price index. This makes it easier for women and for all workers to put food on a table, a roof over their head and to help their own kids get ahead. This will put more money in the pockets of hard-working women and their families, Speaker.

The truth is, though, that Equal Pay Day is a day that simply shouldn't exist. Recognizing the value of work that women do contributes to a more equal, just and prosperous society. So I call on all Ontarians to recommit themselves to closing the gender wage gap so we can achieve fairness in pay.

I now ask the Honourable Teresa Piruzza, minister responsible for women's issues, to continue with her

words on this very important issue.

**Hon.** Teresa Piruzza: I rise to join my colleague the Minister of Labour in recognizing April 16 as Equal Pay Day. I, too, would like to welcome our guests here today. Welcome. Thank you for being here.

I share the minister's and our government's belief in the importance of this day. It's particularly important to the women of Ontario. Today, half of Ontario's workforce are women and more than half of our post-secondary graduates are female. Professionally, women have broken through in every field. Almost 50% of Canada's small and medium-sized businesses are owned or partially owned by women. Across Canada, women-owned small businesses generate a massive \$18 billion annually and provide 1.7 million jobs.

Yet, for all our successes, there are challenges. The fact that the gender wage gap exists means that women's economic potential is not fully utilized. Shortchanging women in the labour market means shortchanging

Ontario's families.

We know that helping women achieve gender equality is vital to Ontario's economic prosperity. We also understand the challenges some women face in the labour market.

My colleague Minister Flynn mentioned the important steps by the Ministry of Labour to increase the minimum wage and strengthen workplace rights for vulnerable workers. I'm very encouraged by these measures because we know that they will particularly benefit women.

Our government is also investing significantly in child care and full-day kindergarten. These investments help women return to the workforce or take training to upgrade their skills, knowing their children are well cared for.

Through the Ontario Women's Directorate, we're also investing in training programs for women, to help them secure better-paying jobs in the skilled trades and the information technology sector.

We also continue to support the advancement of women in business and in senior leadership positions. We know that today women account for just 15.9% of board

members in the Financial Post 500 companies.

This past summer, our government asked the Ontario Securities Commission to undertake a review and public consultation on a "comply or explain" approach to corporate governance. We did this because there remains a stigma in the corporate world that we must work hard to change. We've seen that when other countries have adopted a "comply or explain" approach, there has been an increase in female corporate leadership.

As a government, and as female role models, we must continue to work hard to break down all these barriers for the women of today and the leaders of tomorrow. So let's join together to recognize Equal Pay Day to promote the equality of women. We must close the gender gap for all Ontario women, whether ensuring a decent wage for front-line service providers, breaking the corporate glass ceiling for senior business leaders, or overcoming an equality barrier faced by women in the skilled trades, because we all know it's good for our economy and it's the right thing to do. Strong women mean a strong Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Responses?

**Mr. Monte McNaughton:** I, too, am pleased to rise today to speak about Equal Pay Day. I'll share my time with the PC MPP from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

It is important to reflect on the progress that is being made in this province and all across the country. It was back in 1987 that this province introduced the Ontario Pay Equity Act as the first important step in recognizing the equal value of women's work and eliminating discrimination in the workforce. This legislation requires employers to take steps to ensure that both women and men are paid on the same basis. The result is that Ontario's wage gap has narrowed significantly since the Ontario government first passed legislation to establish the proactive pay equity law. Through the combined efforts of the general public, businesses and government, more awareness is created about the causes of the wage gap and more concrete steps are taken to better address and ultimately close it.

Our PC caucus has strongly advocated for a government that helps create a fair, productive and sustainable society for all. We are proud to support the very capable and intelligent women in our society. Look around, Speaker, and we see many of them in our caucus and in this Legislature today and in workplaces all across our great province.

However, in government and across the public sector, the focus should be on people being paid based on performance, and though we have made some progress, there is still work to be done. Speaker, those who can deliver outstanding work should be rewarded through an efficiently managed system of performance pay. Having clearly established goals and delivering on them to make Ontario stronger and better should be our top priority.

On behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus, I'm committed to continue standing up for hard-working individuals in Ontario and committed to working toward a society of equal pay for equal work and continuing to break down barriers for women.

**Ms.** Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today as the PC critic for women to speak about Equal Pay Day.

Before I talk about equal pay, I want to commend the former PC Minister of Labour, the Honourable Charles Daley, who introduced Bill 120, Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act, back in 1951. I didn't expect anyone to know his name here. This bill stated that "no employer and no person acting on his behalf shall discriminate between his male and female employees by paying a female employee at a rate of pay less than the rate of pay

paid to a male employee employed by him for the same work done in the same establishment." I know those words seem awkward in this day and age, but the bill received royal assent on April 5, 1951.

Although pay equity is the law in Ontario, women, on average, still earn 31% less than men. This pay gap affects women of all ages and education levels, and has an even greater effect on racialized women, women with disabilities and aboriginal women.

Social service providers such as child care, child welfare, development services and community agency staff who work in predominantly female-dominated jobs are directly affected by pay inequality in Ontario. They want the Ontario Premier to take action in closing the pay gap between women and men.

Several agencies—and I know we've all met with them in our communities—have noted that the proxy pay equity obligations are a heavy financial burden and are creating a wage gap between agencies offering the same services within the sector. In 2009, this government stopped paying these agencies the base funding that they needed to match the increases that they are obligated to pay under the pay equity plan. These agencies still have an outstanding liability across the industry, and they are either going to end up in deficit if they don't pay it and are accruing liability that will cripple them—I would name Community Living and Horizons groups, just to name a few.

1530

So they're facing significant issues that are going to jeopardize the care as well as employment in that sector. I wanted to highlight that today, because these workers provide care for the most vulnerable in our society. So if the government would like to look at that and take action, I hope there's a promise over there, because this issue, in 2014 especially, is going to have to be addressed.

There are many statistics out there of women receiving less pay. I know that the women in my riding are valued members of the workforce, and this should be reflected in equal pay for them. Strong women; strong society; strong

families; strong province of Ontario.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I want to thank the government for bringing into play a motion that I tabled last year and was tabled on behalf, of course, of the entire New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath. Not giving credit to a woman on Equal Pay Day is kind of apropos, I think, because this is the day that we're acknowledging that women should get credit for the work that they do. So, hey, no hard feelings.

Shockingly, I want to point out, however, that it's getting worse. The problem is getting worse. It used to be, last year, that women made about \$0.72 for every \$1 a man made for work of equal value; now it's about \$0.69. The problem is getting worse under this government's watch. I think that is point number one. It is a critical point. You heard the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock speak about the pay equity issue that this government itself is in breach of. So the very first thing that one would ask of the honourable ministers over there is that they honour their own sentiments.

When it comes to Community Living—and I'm going to give an example. Community Living Guelph Wellington received an order from the Pay Equity Commission which states that they must make pay equity adjustments to employees' wage rates back to April 1, 2010. As the other member noted, this is not for them alone. This is a problem across the field. The only place they get their money is from this government. They cannot pay out what they do not get in. They are a government agency and, as such, the responsibility of this government. In fact, in the Select Committee on Developmental Disabilities, they were looking at recommendations. I'm sure one of the recommendations will be to uphold their own law, So that's critical.

What is Equal Pay Day? Really what it is: It illustrates how far into the next year a woman must work to earn the same amount a man made in the previous year. That's the point. That's why the date is ever-shifting. In my motion, it said April 9, which it was last year. Guess what? The situation is much worse. It's now April 16.

I'm pleased, as I say again, that the government has acted on my motion. I'm delighted. It would have been nice to have been given credit, and to the New Democratic Party, for the work that we did and also for the work, of course, that the Equal Pay Coalition has done, because really it's them that had brought this forward, that had brought it to our attention, and that work every day on this issue. It would be nice to pay them well, too, to give them a little bit more money to their work, because it is very difficult to do their work when they're not funded properly either.

Again, my advice to my friends across the aisle is this: acknowledge when a woman does something good; acknowledge women's work—in this case, my own. That would be nice. That's number one. Number two: Do something about your own breach of the pay equity legislation. Actually pay women the rate that they're entitled to across the Community Living sector, among others, but particularly where an order has come from the Pay Equity Commission. At least uphold your own law. So I would suggest that.

Then, of course, when we look broader across the industry—yes, it's good to study the issue; yes, it's good to actually be proactive about it, but again, it's not looking good after 11 years that the situation is getting worse under your watch. We've seen that things from last year to this year are progressing in a negative direction. Let's hope, finally, that from this year to next year, the date that we celebrate Pay Equity Day or Equal Pay Day is maybe January 1. Wouldn't that be nice? It would be nice. That's my advice.

#### **PETITIONS**

### PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Petitions. The member for Durham.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you very much. Very acute observation there, Speaker. Appreciate it very much. You got us all on our toes here.

**Interjection:** He doesn't even have one.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, I have thousands of them.

A petition from the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIPfunded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers

again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-

funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to pay for treatment;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I am pleased to present this to Kathryn, one of the pages, and sign it to support it.

#### **TAXATION**

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-

bly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this and will affix my signature and give it to

page Isabella to deliver to the table.

#### TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural, mining or forestry equipment tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1.311.24; and

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces; and

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt some of these tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75; and

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers, mining and forestry companies and lost

sales for equipment dealerships; and

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural, mining and forestry off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I sign my name to this, approve of it and give it to

page Divya.

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands:

"Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike;

"Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

"Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign this and I'm going to give it to Caroline to deliver to the desk.

1540

#### **TAXATION**

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Gas Tax Increase.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government is considering a 10-centsper-litre increase on the provincial gas tax to fund mass transit; and

"Whereas the government's alternative is to raise the gas tax five cents per litre and increase the harmonized sales tax by 0.5%; and

"Whereas many people in rural Ontario need to drive to get to and from work or school or to get groceries and other essentials and do not have the option of taking mass transit; and

"Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase of the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families; and

"Whereas the increase in the gas tax would cost the average Ontario household \$260 a year; and

"Whereas the government should cut waste to fund mass transit before taxing Ontarians;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reduce waste and fund mass transit through methods that do not place an unnecessary financial burden on the people of Ontario, especially those who must drive to and from work or school."

It's signed by hundreds of people across my riding. I affix my signature to it.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes to me from Mrs. Rainville from Herman Mayer Drive in Lively, as well as from Mr. and Mrs. Williams from Alban. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Callista to bring it to the Clerk.

### ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim Wilson: Ontario College of Trades

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and "Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I certainly agree with this petition and I will sign it.

#### DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and" all "mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective"—and cruel, I would add—"approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and" all dog types.

On behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been killed just because of the way they looked, I'm signing this and giving it to Eli to deliver.

#### HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as 'mostly consisting of the difference between the market price and the price paid to generators as set by the board for OPG or under contract with the government or the OPA'; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has been rising steadily over the last few years and is expected to continue to rise from \$700 million (prior to the 2009 passage of the Green Energy Act) to \$8.1 billion by 2014; and

"Whereas the Liberal government's 2010 fall economic statement stated that hydro bills are expected to rise 46% by 2015, and that new renewable power generation would account for 56% of that increase; and

"Whereas small to mid-sized businesses across Ontario are seeing the global adjustment portion of their monthly hydro bills increase significantly to the point that it is now larger than the actual energy portion of their bills; and

"Whereas many of those businesses are now delaying investment or hiring, or both, and considering either closing or moving outside of the province of Ontario as a result of delivered-to-market industrial energy rates that are now the highest in North America;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on its expensive energy policy by cancelling the feed-in tariff (FIT) subsidies and treating Ontario's energy as an economic development tool so that it once again is a competitive advantage for Ontario in retaining and attracting jobs and investment."

I wholeheartedly agree with his, will sign it, and send it to the table with page Isabella.

#### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from people all over northeastern Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans" have been performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name, and ask page Megan to bring it to the Clerk.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1:

"Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

"Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

"Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, Madam Speaker, and I will give my petition to page Nick.

### PENSION PLAN

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents.

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1 'too-big-to-fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo Salaried Pension Organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

"That in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made to ensure GM fully funds pension plan 0340950; and continues to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with its retirement commitments; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect the pensions of GM retirees."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and present it to Justin.

#### **FIREFIGHTERS**

**M**^{me} **France Gélinas:** I have this petition that comes from firefighters all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens; and

"Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities; and

"Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the generall population;"

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They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act ... to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Nusaybah to bring it to the Clerk.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FIGHTING FRAUD AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014

### LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act respecting insurance system reforms and repair and storage liens / Projet de loi 171, Loi concernant les réformes du système d'assurance et le privilège des réparateurs et des entreposeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As was pointed out, the last time we debated Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, was March 25. I'm just going to sort of carry on from that—almost finished.

Although, before I do, I want to talk about how many government bills are currently up and awaiting debate, because I think it calls into question the priorities—if there are any—of the Liberal government.

Right now, today, we have 28 active government bills sitting on the docket, all of which can be called, as we all know, by the government House leader at any given point. The fact that we've got 28 of them—my dad used to say, "If you have too many priorities, you don't have any priorities." I do question whether we need to have a little more focus, a little more direction on where this government wants to go in terms of debate on legislation that needs to be passed.

Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, is a fascinating piece of legislation, but is it the priority of this government? I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The minister for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: She wasn't up. I will cede, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All right. The member for London–Fanshawe.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** That was very gracious of the minister for seniors. I appreciate that very much.

I want to just add a couple of minutes to the comment the member has made. She's right; when you have too many priorities, you don't have any at all. There should be some focus on where this government is going. I point to the budget, and it will be interesting, when the budget comes to the House, to find out where their priorities are for the people of Ontario, for the people of the province, and how they're going to improve things for the people of Ontario.

We're going to be speaking about Bill 171. This bill was brought forward by the Minister of Finance with respect to addressing the issue of the high cost of insurance. We had brought that to light, that people could not afford the cost of insurance the way things were going in this province. We asked this government to look at a 15% decrease. We also see that they've sent this bill to the table, Bill 171, and it's supposed to address that fraud issue, because that was something that was very much discussed in committee. I know we're going to have debates today and I know that will come up, and how this bill is effectively working on that topic to help fraud and so, in that case, reduce auto rates. But we do have our doubts that that specific fraud piece in this bill is going to specifically address the premiums section that people pay for their auto and home insurance.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further

Hon. Mario Sergio: Now I'll take my two minutes. I know the member from Dufferin-Caledon has spoken at quite some length on this particular bill and indeed it is one of the many bills that we do need to pass in the House. This is an important one and it has been talked about already for quite some time.

As we all know in the House, last year, as we recall, the House passed legislation that would bring some relief to our drivers in Ontario, and for good reason. As you know, insurance rates are what they are, but we have come a long way, and since last year we have already seen a shift in premiums, in insurance rates. We see insurance companies advertising their lower premiums already. We would be telling our consumers to check around instead of taking a blank response from their present insurance company. Rates are coming down. If the present bill, Bill 171, were to be approved, it would move closer to becoming a reality. I think this is what we all want: to bring some relief to our taxpayers.

What would the bill do? It's fighting fraud. We all know that there is a problem with that. Also, there is one problem with the storage of automobiles. They're sitting too long and therefore charging too much.

We have already spoken about this particular bill in the House many times—both sides of the House. We have the responsibility to pass every bill that, hopefully, is introduced, but this one here is one of those that I think is important. I think we should do it, and I hope that we can do it as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I was here the last day that the member from Dufferin–Caledon was speaking. In her 20 minutes, she did summarize a number of the concerns that we have on this bill.

Responding here to the promised 15% rate reduction—is completely a false advertising issue, in my opinion. The issue of fraud has been dealt with in special reports. The health care and assessment issues, the

towing issues, the auto repair and fraud within that, the victims, and the whole group of people insured under the facilities provision are not thoroughly dealt with in this Bill 171. And our critic on the file, Jeff Yurek from Elgin–Middlesex–London, has consulted widely and has come up with some very significant supportive amendments. All of us would like to see reform to auto insurance to be a mandatory affordable product. As such, it should go to committee and receive the proper input, just so it doesn't become another football in the arena of making political and electoral promises, really is what I see.

They promised it in response to a request, in fact, by the NDP—the coalition agreement that they had with the last budget. That's where this came from. I can tell you right now, I have very little confidence that this will actually happen. My sense is, if you look at the issues and how they're dealing with it, they're actually giving rate rebates to the bad drivers in Ontario right now. The good drivers, like myself—I actually had a slight increase, and I'm paying a high rate of insurance. So the evidence isn't there to support anything they've said.

I support the member from Dufferin-Caledon for putting her statements on the record. This bill certainly has to go to committee, and I think our finance critic and others will be commenting more thoroughly on this in just a few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. As the previous speaker just said, he has very little confidence that this bill will actually go forward, that it will be passed and that—I'll paraphrase a little bit, but he seems concerned that we'll continue to go on this little merrygo-round.

It's true that the rate of auto insurance in the province of Ontario has been a big issue over the past many years but especially over the past couple of years, as my party has prioritized seeing some significant movement for the people of this province. In Kenora–Rainy River—I'm going to speak to this a little bit later—we don't often have the luxury of public transportation, and so that means, as with many rural areas of this province, we have to rely on our vehicles to get us from point A to point B.

My concern is that this bill actually will pass. I don't want to see it pass in its current form, because in its current form the only thing that it does to help people across this province is to have a flashy title: Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates. But if you look at the content of the bill, there's actually very little in there. It doesn't seem to do anything in the way of helping individuals in this province reduce their rates, but it does seem to do a whole lot to help auto insurance companies to bring down their costs and maximize their profits.

I do welcome hearing more debate on this. I welcome seeing some substantive changes in committee, should it make it to committee, and we'll continue this discussion a little later on this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin-Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To the member from London-Fanshawe, the minister responsible for seniors, the members from Durham and Kenora-Rainy River, thank

you for your comments.

Bill 171 is an issue. However—there's always a "however," Speaker-I was at a home show all weekend-Friday night, Saturday and Sunday—manning my booth. And you know what is truly an issue for the residents in Dufferin-Caledon? Do you know what, without almost any exceptions, people were talking about?

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Madam

Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Not during the two-minute-

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, we don't have a quorum, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm going to ask the Clerk to check.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin-Caledon, you have a few moments

to wrap up.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, certainly auto insurance is a concern for the people in Dufferin-Caledon, but almost without exception, what people were raising with me during the home showoperated by the Lions Club—was energy costs. We've gone through an incredible winter. Quite frankly, it didn't matter what kind of power you were using, you were going through huge increases. Many of the questions and many of the concerns were basically, "Why is this happening? Tell me why it's all happening with so many of them across the sectors?" Which, of course, led to some very interesting conversations about cause and effect, the Green Energy Act, subsidies for wind and solar power, and what that has actually done to energy rates in Ontario. Those, of course, were the constituents who were lucky enough to be receiving their Ontario hydro bills. There were a number of them who were asking for my assistance—believe it or not—to get a bill from Hydro One so they could pay it.

In terms of Bill 171, I would be pleased to have this referred to committee for further debate and amendments, but at some point we have to get-

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —I'd like to point out that the member opposite wasn't speaking to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I listened carefully to the-

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to point out that the member, in my humble opinion, was addressing around the bill, and that member who complained wasn't here. That member wasn't even here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. The member from London West will take the floor.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of my constituents in London West to speak to Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. From its title this bill certainly sounds like something that would be important to the people I represent, because they have been waiting a long time for a reduction in auto insurance rates. In fact, I think many of my constituents would be glad even if the bill was called "the fighting fraud and not increasing auto insurance rates act," because at a time when people were led to believe that rates would go down, what they've been seeing instead are increases in rates.

Even people with no history of accidents or tickets are seeing their rates increase, with no recourse or explanation from insurance companies. One constituent, a single mother of two who has never been in an accident, saw her bill increase by 10%. She just wrote to me this month asking why big insurance companies are allowed to get away with hiking up rates by exorbitant amounts without

providing any legitimate reasons for doing so.

Many other constituents in London West have contacted me to ask when the 15% reduction in auto insurance that was promised by the Liberal government will come into effect. My colleagues and I on this side of the House know that families in our communities are struggling to make ends meet, which is why we insisted that the government include a 15% rate reduction in last vear's budget. But, as I mentioned, not only are my constituents not seeing those promised rate reductions; they are seeing their rates increase. As we all know, rate increases, whether it's auto insurance, hydro or gas, have a disproportionate impact on people with low incomes and on seniors and others with fixed incomes. In the case of auto insurance, people who drive don't have a choice of whether or not to buy insurance. The government, quite sensibly, requires anyone who drives to be insured, which means that the government has an obligation to regulate the industry and make sure that rates are fair and that regulations reflect an appropriate balance between industry needs and protection of the rights of consumers.

The other part of the title of this bill, "Fighting Fraud," is also something that is important to the people of London West and to all Ontarians. Fighting fraud is definitely something we can all agree on. We know that the costs of fraud end up being directly passed on to the consumer and are used to justify premium increases, so it appears from its title that Bill 171 is designed to rid the

system of fraud, which will reduce costs for insurance companies, which can then be used to lower insurance rates

Unfortunately, the only thing this bill really does is reduce costs for insurance companies. It is another gift for huge insurance companies at the expense of auto insurance policyholders and accident victims. It will do nothing to fight fraud and nothing to reduce insurance rates.

I want to begin my remarks on Bill 171 with an overview of what the legislation includes and then move on to why this bill is problematic for my colleagues and I in the NDP caucus.

First, I want to outline the parts of the bill that my colleagues and I have very little trouble with. These aspects deal with the licensing of insurance agents and adjusters and clarification of repair and storage liens.

Adding a level of accountability for insurance agents and adjusters is completely understandable and acceptable. Our caucus has not received any complaints or concerns about this aspect of the bill. More oversight is always a good thing, especially when we are dealing with a product that the government has made mandatory for Ontarians.

In terms of the provisions of the bill dealing with repair and storage liens, we know that there were issues surrounding the towing and storage of vehicles after accidents had taken place. This bill deals with that in a non-contentious way. The bill will reduce the amount of time a vehicle can be stored and accruing charges from 60 days to a shorter time frame.

As a caucus, we have no problems with either of these aspects of the bill.

The two key parts of the bill that we find troublesome, however, have to do with dispute resolution and prejudgment interest.

In terms of dispute resolution, currently, accident victims have the right to go to court or to arbitration if they believe they have been wrongfully denied benefits by their insurance company. However, under the proposed legislation, the right to sue will be taken away entirely. Subsection 280(3) of this bill precludes the ability for someone to bring an action against their insurance company to court, which we regard as a fundamental abrogation of the rights of the people in Ontario. As one of my constituents who wrote to me about this bill said, "Bill 171 proposes to deny accident victims due process and the right to appeal in motor vehicle benefit disputes with their insurance company. Removing a person's fundamental right to sue is a breach of one's fundamental rights to justice, which clearly ought to supersede any legislative intent." This concern about access to justice for victims is shared by every member of my caucus. Denying accident victims access to the courts represents what we see as one of the most glaring deficiencies of this legislation as currently proposed.

Under Bill 171, instead of going to court, claimants who feel that they have been denied benefits must advance their claims to the Licence Appeal Tribunal in

the Ministry of the Attorney General. Instead of providing recourse to an independent judicial system that safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens, people who have been injured must take their claims to a tribunal.

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Reading the speeches from the members on the other side of the House, I've heard that there is a view that moving the dispute resolution process to the Licence Appeal Tribunal was a recommendation of Justice Cunningham in his comprehensive report. However, as pointed out by my colleague the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Justice Cunningham indicated only that there should be a separation between FSCO as an adjudicator and FSCO as a regulator. It's important to keep in mind that arbitrators at FSCO are already independent; not only that, they are salaried, with stable jobs and lots of experience dealing with complicated issues.

The Licence Appeal Tribunal, by comparison, deals with liquor licence violations and driving-related offences, not complex issues like liability. The tribunal may be appropriate to handle some of the disputes in the system, but tribunal members are simply less qualified and experienced than FSCO arbitrators, and moving the dispute resolution process to this venue makes little sense. It may actually harm vulnerable accident victims who are seeking redress from insurance companies.

To be clear, Justice Cunningham never suggested that the dispute resolution process be moved to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. As a caucus, New Democrats have significant concerns about the impact this will have on Ontarians.

Further, as a researcher who believes that policy should be based on evidence, I want to draw MPPs' attention to the fact that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that moving the dispute resolution process in FSCO to the Licence Appeal Tribunal will contribute to reducing costs. In fact, it is even possible that moving the process to the Licence Appeal Tribunal may actually add costs to the system and be to the financial detriment of the province.

What is clear is that these changes, removing access to the courts and replacing independent judicial review with a tribunal, do not have anything to do with fighting fraud. They are mostly about making it easier for insurance companies to wrongfully deny benefits and delay settlements and will make it harder for injured Ontarians to collect what they are rightfully owed. The changes add further complexity and costs to an already complex and costly process. Previously, if an accident victim was denied benefits and was injured because of someone else's fault, they could seek redress from the court system on both counts. Now an accident victim who wants to dispute benefits will have to take his or her case to the new arbitration system while also pursuing their legal suit in court. They will have to pay a lawyer to bring in two entirely different cases in two entirely different systems, one in the courts against the person responsible and one in the arbitration system against the insurance company that wrongfully denied benefits.

Moving beyond this, a significant disadvantage of this proposed system is that if the accident victim is successful in proving that the insurance company should have paid the claimed benefits, the insurance company only has to pay a tiny fraction of the legal costs, unlike in the court system. In effect, this bill places the financial burden of extra legal costs on the victim, who is already in a vulnerable situation. We know that our complex auto insurance system makes it extremely difficult for people to access the benefits that they are reasonably entitled to, and this proposed change will only exacerbate this issue. It may lead people to just give up because they cannot afford the fight. It is hard to understand how this serves to protect the interests of Ontarians, especially the most vulnerable members of our population.

The other flaw in this legislation is the provision that deals with prejudgment interest. Bill 171 will change a 30-year-old rule that has been very important to people who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering is and always was intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying damages. Simply put, it ensures timely payment to victims for pain and suffering damages by insurance companies.

As we know, current legislation says that insurance companies are required to pay 5% interest on whatever is owed for pain and suffering. For example, if a person has a serious injury and is owed \$50,000 for pain and suffering and the insurance company delays payment for three years, the insurance company will pay about \$7,500 in interest. The reason the interest rate is set at 5% is to encourage insurance companies to settle quickly and not to drag their heels and delay the issue over many years.

The interest rate serves to protect the injured party from long delays in collecting what they are entitled to. Bill 171 changes this policy, a policy that protects the interests of the people of this province. It makes it easier for insurance companies to increase their profits by lowering the interest rate to 1.3% and allowing it to be modified quarterly. This provides a further disincentive for insurance companies to settle claims. Instead of paying out settlements to avoid a 5% interest penalty, insurers can hold on to this money and invest it at a profit, knowing that they will only have to pay the low rate of a 1.3% penalty when they finally settle.

How this policy will serve to protect the interests of everyday Ontarians is not at all clear. We already know that insurance companies can make money by delaying the claim process. This new legislation will mean that they can benefit even further on the backs of victims. Again, it is hard to understand how this has anything to do with either fighting fraud or reducing auto insurance rates, because all of the evidence suggests that this change is nothing more than another gift to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector.

As I've been explaining, this legislation, as it is currently proposed, will do more harm than good for the people of my community in London as well as across the province. This is what happens when legislation is rushed through. Within just two weeks of the release of Justice Cunningham's report, Bill 171 suddenly appeared in this House as a way to address some of the issues presented in the report. The government's rush to introduce legislation means that there was no consultation with the public. Perhaps more concerning, there was no consultation with experts in the field. I think that we would all agree that the best and most effective policies are evidence-based. It's clear that this legislation lacks proof or evidence that the steps taken in this bill will reduce costs.

On this point, quoting from correspondence with another one of my constituents in London West, "the current amendments were not introduced with consultation or consideration of the accident victims in Ontario." Again, I think the problems that my colleagues and I in the NDP caucus who have spoken to this bill—these concerns about Bill 171 arise because of the lack of consultation or evidence upon which this proposed legislation is based.

I would also like to highlight the fact that the legislated 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums—or maybe I should say expected reduction, because we have seen little action on this promise. These rate reductions have led to auto insurance companies raising concerns about the impact of the reductions on their profits. This bill may simply reflect the industry's push to protect their profits and in fact get some of their profits back. The bill is mostly about cost containment.

I think we need to put some of the responsibility for cutting of costs on the auto insurance companies and not just on the people of Ontario. The changes that were made in 2010, which essentially capped the amount of money that insurance companies had to pay out, represented a huge \$2-billion windfall for insurers. At the time, the government said that this would lead to a reduction in rates, but we haven't seen that. Not only have these cost savings not been passed on to consumers, but it seems that the insurance companies are not doing their part to cut fat and increase efficiency in the system. We should be looking at insurance companies to lead the way in cutting costs, instead of exacerbating an already negative situation for innocent victims in Ontario. This proposed legislation does nothing to address the lack of efficiencies in the system, and I think that that's something we need to carefully consider in the future.

#### 1620

In conclusion, I welcome further explanation from the government on how this legislation actually has anything to do with fighting fraud or reducing auto insurance rates, because it's not at all clear that this bill will do either of those things. As I've stated earlier, the many constituents who have been contacting my office to express concerns about Bill 171, about increasing auto insurance rates and about the lack of follow-through on the part of government to implement the 15% reduction promised in the last budget, do not believe that this legislation is requesting to address their concerns.

Vulnerable members of our community will be hit the hardest by the provisions of this bill. It will take away a person's right to due process and access to legal redress, which is a significant concern for our caucus. Beyond the lack of evidence that moving the dispute resolution process to the Licence Appeal Tribunal will reduce costs in the system, I want to make sure that all members here understand the negative impact that lowering the interest rate will have on pain and suffering for the people of this province. The proposed legislation will in fact incentivize insurance companies to delay settling claims and make it easier for insurers to make a profit by delaying victims their rightfully owed settlements.

For my constituents in London West, this bill offers little relief to the high costs of auto insurance, which is what New Democrats will continue to push for.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate and look forward to hearing the comments of other members on Bill 171.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comment and questions?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to stand and debate Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. Automobile insurance fraud is an issue that I have been aware of for some time. I regularly hear from my constituents that they are sick and tired of the fraud within the auto insurance industry. Auto fraud is the most dreadful beast that must be tackled first and foremost. This is what the bill is addressing. This bill would improve consumer protection, reduce cost and uncertainty, and strengthen Ontario's auto insurance system.

I heard from the member the Kenora-Rainy River and the member from London West. They said that this bill would not address the issue of fraud, and the member from Kenora-Rainy River said that it has a flashy title, nothing more than that. The record of the respective governments tells the whole story. It is our government that has kept the auto insurance rates below the inflation rate. When the PCs were in power, the rates went up 45%, and when the NDP were in power, rates went up 27%. The NDP ran on the platform that they would make it a public asset, but they failed to deliver it. But this bill will definitely address the issue of fraud. If this bill is passed, this would further reduce cost, fight fraud and protect consumers.

The members from Durham and Dufferin-Caledon said that this should go to committee as soon as possible—and I echo their comments—so that we can hear the public and we can hear the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this bill once again.

You have to look at what has happened throughout some of the history in this whole auto insurance sector, especially in the last couple of years. State Farm, who once held 11% of the insurance sector in Canada, has gone from Canada. There is no State Farm. Those TV commercials that we see for State Farm every day and every night: You can't get it here. They left. In the reason

they left Canada, they cited the Ontario auto insurance market as their reason why they've left Ontario. You also watch TV and you see Flo from Progressive. Speaker, you need to know that there is no Flo here either; you can't have that insurance here in Ontario. This file has been unbelievably mismanaged over the last 10 years.

This whole bill that they're talking about: We're eager to get it into committee so we can fix this. It has unintended consequences. Insurers today—those few that have actually stayed in Ontario—are ridding their books of even the most moderate-risk drivers. They're just cleaning house and sticking with those drivers so they can try to move on in Ontario.

This bill does nothing more than allow the Liberals to continue to scramble and try to keep the promise that they made to the NDP when they bargained for their support during the last budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to contribute to this debate after hearing the comments, or the contributions, that were made by the member from London West.

I have also received, as we all have, phone calls about insurance premiums. Those are one of the biggest costs, sometimes, in a household, depending on how many vehicles you have and how many drivers you have. People just can't afford those kinds of increases that have been happening time and time again.

When we presented the fact that this government—in 2010, the insurance companies changed the coverage under accident benefits and reduced those coverages, and you can see that that action resulted in insurance companies having \$2 billion in profits. So it does make sense that consumers, who pay these insurance premiums, should see the benefit of that change. That was what we had talked about here in the Legislature, but the proposal that this government has decided to address that current issue with, with regard to people affording to pay their insurance rates, is Bill 171.

Their answer to it is, "Fraud is the bogeyman in the insurance industry that's causing all these rates." Fraud is certainly a part of why rates increase, but this bill doesn't address the whole situation. Making accident victims that are injured go through a two-tier legal system does not help the victims; it only helps the insurance companies to continue to make more profit. When are we going to see that relief in premiums? From this bill? I don't think it's going to happen through that.

I'm really interested, when it does go to committee, to listen to some of the suggestions about how improve this bill. I think that having the two-tier system disadvantages accident victims from actually exercising their right to make sure they do get payments for their injuries.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be a part of the discussion today on Bill 171.

I just heard very distinctly from the member from London West—her comments about the rush to bring the bill to the Legislature and the lack of consultation. Let me put this on record: Those of us who have sat on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs have travelled across the province—let's go on record as it is—to talk about auto insurance and auto insurance fraud. Numerous witnesses came before the committee across Ontario—not just here at the Legislature; across Ontario—to talk about fraud and auto insurance fraud. Madam Speaker, to say that it was rushed to bring the bill before the House is not correct. I want that to be on record.

#### 1630

I listened intently to what the member said about some of the comments, that the third party does support-and I listened attentively. This second reading debate is very informative. I welcome those comments so that we can improve the bill when we go back to the committee for further enhancement of the bill. But to say the bill was brought to this House in such a rush is not accurate.

I also listened attentively to my colleague the member from Mississauga-Brampton South, who has spoken passionately to this issue for a number of years that I've been here as a member. The member from the third party. from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, also expressed concern about fraud.

Let's go on record. Let's hear the debate. I fully agree. Some conversation-

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from London West has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the members from Mississauga-Brampton South, Nipissing, London-Fanshawe and Scarborough-Agincourt for their comments. There were several interesting things that were said during those comments. In particular, the member from Mississauga-Brampton South said that her constituents are sick and tired of fraud in the auto insurance industry. I think this strikes a chord with a lot of Ontarians. A lot of Ontarians agree that we need to do something to get rid of fraud.

The problem is, Bill 171 is not the solution. There is nothing in Bill 171 that appropriately addresses the fraud that exists within the system. Instead, as my colleague the member from London-Fanshawe pointed out, it creates a cumbersome process for dispute resolution that requires victims to go through the court and a tribunal. It disadvantages accident victims from exercising their rights

within our legal system.

The member from Scarborough-Agincourt disputed the fact that there was a lack of consultation, but there was no consultation with accident victims about how the provisions in Bill 171 would affect them, their access to justice and their ability to pursue their rights through the system and ensure that they are able to collect the benefits for which they are intended.

I also appreciate the member from Nipissing, who talked about the unintended consequences of the bill, which is what our caucus has been emphasizing: that the bill shuts out legal recourse for victims of accidents.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Although a lot has been said on this bill, we would still like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my honour and privilege to in fact rise today to debate Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, this bill that I will be supporting, and I suspect many of my colleagues will be supporting as well.

Reducing automobile insurance rates is something that the Ontario PC Party takes very seriously. Our critic, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, has had laser-like focus on auto insurance reform over the past few years and has done a terrific job putting forward solid ideas that would improve auto insurance here in Ontario.

This all comes back to the promise made last year by Wynne's Liberal policy development team, the NDP. They promised to cut auto insurance rates by 15%. That was the plan and it sounded nice. You could fit the policy on a bumper sticker or, to update that analogy, you could even tweet their whole plan on auto insurance reform. There's something else out there: "Call so and so; 15 minutes will save you 15%." Well, as we all know, the NDP dutifully propped up the government that we have before us today, the same ones that stand up and criticize with a straight face each and every day in the Houseand auto insurance rates all across Ontario were immediately cut by 15%.

Auto insurance rates did not decrease by 15% across the province. In a lot of places and for a lot of drivers, they didn't decrease at all. In many cases, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, rates quickly increased. Last summer, my constituency offices in Chatham and Learnington received numerous calls from irate drivers who could not believe that their insurance rates were actually increasing. Some of them even remarked that they felt like they had been misled by the government and the NDP on this issue.

This is what happens when you oversimplify a problem and over-promise on its solution. People get frustrated and lose faith in their political institutions. This is, in fact, the problem with the bumper-sticker policy approach of the third party. Auto insurance is an incredibly complex file, and meaningful changes will have to be carefully thought out, not oversimplified in a position that could fit into a tweet. There was no plan, only a wish to cut auto insurance rates by 15%, as if by magic.

Thankfully, Bill 171 contains some meaningful auto insurance reform that will hopefully benefit all Ontarians. In the past, I have met with various auto insurance stakeholders to discuss the many ways that we can begin to tackle the problem of soaring premiums. Cracking down on fraud is something that is brought up by almost every single group, and it's something that we need to take action on now. In fact, the bus stop just outside, at College and University, had an ad up from the Insurance Bureau of Canada that says, "Stop auto insurance fraud." We're reminded of that all the time.

I'm glad that the government is taking some meaningful first steps to tackle this key element of auto insurance reform. I'm hopeful that it can undo some of the damage that was caused by the reckless and irresponsible approach to auto insurance reform that we saw last year.

Two worrisome trends that we in the Ontario PC Party keep a close eye on are the decrease in the availability of insurance and the fact that bad drivers have so far gotten the biggest reductions in their premiums. Last year, State Farm Canada sold its entire property and casualty business in Canada to Desjardins Group. Moody's Investors Service noted that 65% of State Farm Canada's business is concentrated in the Ontario auto insurance market, which it described as "a competitive and higher-risk market."

Speaker, we all know what their motto was: "Like a good neighbour, State Farm is" here—well, was here. It's worrisome that such a large company would decide to pack up and leave this province.

The following quote from a Globe and Mail article written last July predicted this potential negative consequence: "Without the right cost reduction measures, the decrease in premiums would be a challenge for insurers to implement, and could curtail the availability of coverage in the province."

And now we are starting to see examples of the fallout in many of our ridings. We are starting to hear from numerous constituents, in a variety of ridings, that drivers with a few blemishes on their record are being dropped by their insurance carriers. These carriers are refusing to renew their policy when the current policy expires. That's tragic, Speaker.

In New Jersey, they encountered some similar issues when the state made a promise to cut rates by 15% back in 1998. Many companies left the state at that time, which made it difficult for New Jersey drivers to get insurance. While the rates did come down by 15% over two years, the lack of available insurance led to a 27% spike in premiums in 2000, just two years later.

That's not what we want to see here in our province. We have started to see some of the warning signs of a similar trend. By taking the necessary steps now, we can hopefully avoid a spike in the rates a couple of years down the line. We need to ensure that all Ontarians are able to have accessible and affordable auto insurance.

The second negative consequence of the unilateral cuts to insurance rates without the corresponding cost savings is that bad drivers are getting the biggest discounts on their premiums. In the most recent filings in January, we saw that the biggest winners were those drivers insured by non-standard insurers. These are companies that insure the worst drivers, including those with

multiple accidents and drinking-and-driving convictions. Most insurance companies avoid these clients, but certain insurers fill that niche. These non-standard companies and their corresponding rate reductions are as follows: Perth Insurance, 15%; Pafco Insurance, 14.5%; and finally, Echelon General Insurers, 8.7%. We don't need to see good drivers pay the price so bad drivers can get a big break on their auto insurance. I'm sure that no member in this House wants this to be the case. Unfortunately, this is what we're seeing today, thanks in large part to the actions taken by the government and their farm team, the NDP, last year.

That said, Bill 171 provides us with an opportunity to debate the matter in general and to start to tackle the issue. This bill is a step in the right direction, and it will hopefully undo the damage of past policy decisions on this file.

Really and truthfully, this bill is a small step forward. There are a few significant cost savings that will be achieved in this piece of legislation, but are there enough to make this bill worthy of support? It's questionable. Overall, the bill is supported by the insurance industry and relevant stakeholders because they consider it to be a step in the right direction. There are, however, some concerns that we can hopefully sort out in committee, which I will mention later in my remarks.

One issue that the bill seeks to reform is prejudgment interest charges. "Prejudgment interest charges" refers to the interest charges on expenses incurred during the period of a dispute. Currently, the interest on pain-and-suffering amounts is simply locked in at 5%. If passed, Bill 171 would tie this interest rate to the market rate. Interest rates for out-of-pocket expenses incurred during a court proceeding are already tied to market rates, so this is simply a streamlining of practices. We, the PC Party, actually support this proposed change.

Bill 171 also acknowledges the problem of fraud and its effects on the insurance industry and the rates that drivers end up paying. It addresses fraud in a couple of ways; first, by looking at the health clinics that provide services for auto accident victims. The bill proposes issuing licences for these health care providers. This is meant to deal with the fraudulent practices of certain health clinics, mostly within the GTA, that tend to overbill insurers or bill for unperformed services—not a good idea.

The issue of health clinics was addressed in the antifraud task force report released in November 2012. The PC Party has, in fact, called on the government to act on recommendations in this report. To date, the Liberals have only addressed four of the 38 recommendations. This bill would implement four more, if passed. While this proposed change would help combat instances of fraudulent health practices related to auto insurance claims, we feel there may be a better approach to dealing with this issue. Implementing this particular change would require additional bureaucracy as well as inspectors. These costs would fall to the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—FSCO—which by the way is

industry-funded, meaning that any additional costs would ultimately be shouldered by—that's right, Speaker—premium payers.

The anti-fraud task force report also outlined another solution which we feel would have less negative consequences for drivers across the province. Our critic echoed the findings of this report and has called for the use of what we call designated managers, who must be regulated health professionals. Having a designated manager would be a requirement in order for clinics to bill insurers through Health Claims for Auto Insurance, or HCAI—pronounced "H-Kay"—for short. This electronic billing system could be used widely in our province. HCAI is already in place, and health clinics seeking to bill insurers already have to register with this system. We would not be reinventing the wheel; rather, we would simply have better utilization of the technology that is already in place.

HCAI is able to track invoices from health clinics, and because of this, it is able to flag abnormal billing patterns that indicate potentially fraudulent practices. The advantage of using such a method is that there would be a severe penalty for committing acts of fraud. Because they must use the electronic system to bill insurers, fraudulent

clinics could be cut off of it.

Finally, having a regulated health professional responsible for the billing practices of each clinic creates a disincentive for committing acts of fraud. Someone's health professional licence could be on the line, so they would have to think long and hard about committing fraud.

Our proposed amendments would, in fact, be a very responsible use of resources that are already in place to increase accountability in the health care sector when it comes to auto claims. I personally feel that this is the right way to go, and I hope that the minister is open to these friendly amendments.

Another subject that this bill seeks to address is repair and storage liens. This part of the act requires body shops and tow truck operators to give notice of vehicles in their possession to the owners of the vehicles in a reasonable time frame. In particular, the bill covers instances where the storer has reason to believe that the vehicle they are holding was received from a person other than the owner of the vehicle. This would help to provide fair value for drivers when it comes to storage and repair costs. This can be thought of as a consumer protection amendment, and it is one that we most definitely support.

One of the most meaningful sections of the bill deals with reforming the dispute resolution system. This goes back to a promise that the Liberals made back in the 2011 budget to review the system that is available to insurance claimants. Currently, FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, administers the process. If a claimant is denied certain coverage as prescribed by their statutory accident benefits by an insurer, they can initiate a dispute. These benefits must be purchased by drivers, by

law

There are currently three injury classifications under the statutory no-fault coverage on auto insurance. These include minor injuries such as sprains or soft tissue injuries, non-catastrophic injuries, and catastrophic injuries, which include things like paralysis or loss of limbs. Most disputes are about whether or not someone's injuries are classified as minor or non-catastrophic. This is a bit of a grey area, so it leads to many disputes between claimants and insurers.

If someone tries to dispute a decision made by their insurer, they must first go through a mediation session with a FSCO-employed mediator. As members have mentioned, the Auditor General noted in 2011 that the mediation phase was a severe bottleneck that caused a significant delay in the overall process. At that time, there were 30,000 cases in the backlog. Now, that number has since been decreased to roughly 16,000, but this sizable backlog continues to delay settlements being reached and adds additional costs to the system. All parties can agree that the current practice leaves a lot to be desired.

Bill 171 seeks to move the entire dispute resolution system to the Ministry of the Attorney General's Licence Appeal Tribunal, which is already in place. This would simply move administrative costs, not reduce them. It would now be funded by tax dollars and not come out of auto insurance fees. If you happen to pay taxes and insurance fees, you're just paying from somewhere else.

Lastly, this bill does not get to the heart of the matter when it comes to the long wait times of disputes. The issue is why so many of these cases end up as disputes in the first place. The PC Party has in fact recommended using existing medical assessment guidelines to have truly independent third party assessments. This would have a number of benefits. It would make injury classifications more black and white. By removing the grey area that is currently found in the injury guidelines, we will and could very possibly eliminate the need for many of these disputes.

Madam Speaker, we've also had some strong feedback from lawyers representing both insurers and claimants regarding Bill 171's prohibition of using the court system when a dispute involves a no-fault claim. Today, Ontario has a hybrid insurance system that accommodates both tort claims, such as negligence and pain and suffering, as well as no-fault claims, such as accident benefits or home care. When disputes are not resolved in mediation, the current practice is for the plaintiff and defendant to decide whether or not to pursue the matter either in court or through an arbitrator. If the bill passes as it is, those faced with cases that involve both a tort and no-fault component would have to appear in court and in front of a tribunal separately. This is inefficient and costly, and, most importantly, it does not make sense from the claimant's point of view.

As I had previously mentioned, lawyers representing both sides of this issue have problems with that particular section of the bill. I'm sure they will reiterate these concerns in committee, where I hope we can in fact strengthen Bill 171.

In summary, this is a bill that the Liberals are clearly fast-tracking through the House in an effort to get a win on auto insurance before the budget is released and a potential election.

With the fact that good weather is fast approaching, I'm actually looking forward to contacting my insurance broker, Ross Insurance back in Chatham, to get my little sports car back on the road and enjoy this great weather. By the way, the insurance rates aren't so bad, either.

But, again, despite the convenient timing of this particular bill, there are some good elements in the bill, and this is one that I and my caucus will be supporting at second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I was listening intently to the member's presentation. It never ceases to amaze me around this building when parties get up, and they'll criticize and tear a thing apart, and then they'll say, "But we'll be supporting it." You've got to wonder.

The real problem here is this: Fraud is a big part of this. There's no doubt about it. You've got your chop shops. You've got your fake medical claims and stuff—all these things. Certainly, that plays a part. But with all due respect, there's a good percentage of people in this province who drive without any insurance at all. That's the guy who hits you, and then they have no insurance. But our government, in its infinite wisdom—and the police only act under the legislation—they don't do anything to these people. They don't lose their licence for not being insured—they might get a little fine—they don't suspend them. They don't do enough to go after the people who are driving illegally in the province. That happens all the time; they don't enforce it.

The problem in this province is that the police don't have the resources to stop every car that they think may be insured or may not. They might pull you over if you don't have your updated sticker, but they haven't got the time, the energy or the resources to patrol it. That's another huge thing.

The member mentioned this insurance company leaving Ontario. They probably left Ontario because they were only making a 75% profit instead of a 150% profit. That's why they left. If you look back in the history of Ontario, maybe the odd little one, but no insurance companies have ever gone under. No banks have gone under in Ontario.

Someone is making a lot of money somewhere, and all of a sudden they're not making enough, so they decide to leave and put pressure on people and on the government by going back to the States or wherever they come from. If that's the way they operate, go ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by addressing some of the comments by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He sounded a little disappointed that no insurance companies or banks have gone under in Ontario. I think that's a good thing. It's a good thing that

no bank and no insurance company has gone under. I'm a little confused as to why he sounded disappointed.

The other thing I wanted to speak on: I've heard a lot of members say that they support the bill, but they are suggesting that insurance rates are not reducing. I'm just going to say this: If members think that an insurance company is actually going to send a renewal notice saying, "Your insurance just went down 15%," that's not the way the market works. But if you shop around, you will most likely get a reduction in your insurance.

When my constituents call me and say they're facing an increase, what I tell them is to shop around. I have found many instances where my constituents have called me back and said—

Interjections.

**Ms. Dipika Damerla:** There have been many instances where my constituents have called me back and said—

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: They first call to say that their insurance rates have gone up. I counsel them to shop around, and there have been cases where they have called back and said, "Yes, insurance rates have gone down." So you have to shop around.

On the issue of some of those anti-fraud provisions, as the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek himself acknowledged, fraud is an issue, so this bill is a good start in trying to fight that fraud.

In the meantime, I also want to say that there are close to 50 insurance companies in Ontario that filed reductions last Christmas, and I believe on April 1, another bunch of insurance companies filed for rate reductions. We'll see what happens.

If I can leave you with one thought: Shop around if you want your insurance rates—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to be here today and speak to this bill for a couple of moments.

I think the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex did a pretty good job of summation and a good analysis of the bill.

I'd like to give a shout-out—we're advertising insurance companies. I'd like to mention my insurance company back home: Cam-Ron Insurance. I've been with them all my life. My father was—

Mr. Paul Miller: That's advertising.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He used them before me. Anyway, they're a long-time insurance broker back in Sarnia-Lambton doing an excellent job.

As far as the bill here, as our member from Chatham–Kent–Essex said, we in the Tory caucus intend to support it at second reading. We want to get it to committee and improve the bill. Bills always can be improved at committee. I had two private members' bills myself that went to committee. They were in pretty good shape to start with, but we had improvements when it got to committee. They've been passed into legislation, I'm proud to say, along with—my colleague from Hamilton

East-Stoney Creek actually was a cohort with our bill, One Call. That's an example of working together in this Legislature. We worked together and we got that bill through—

**Interjection:** You just call one number.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, One Call. That's what the insurance business uses: one number. So they just had one call to make.

Maybe, John, when the Attorney General leaves, that's something you could do. You could start up an insurance business and have a one-call system and we could all call you; right? Everybody would know you.

Interjection.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** You don't want to be called when you retire. He says, "Don't call me. I've had enough calls

over the years. Don't call me anymore."

It's going to be an interesting debate here this afternoon. I look forward to hearing from the rest of the members from all over the province. Everyone brings a different perspective to these debates, so I look forward to this debate. There are a lot of serious issues around insurance. As the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said, I have family in law enforcement, and people do drive without insurance. So anything we can do to discourage that, all the better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further

comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for his comments. I listened intently. I see that there is a certain degree of consensus around the need to fight fraud and the priority that all of our constituents place on reducing auto insurance rates. We're all getting those phone calls from constituents who are not only not seeing their rates go down, but are actually seeing their rates increase.

1700

As legislators, we have an obligation to do more than advise our constituents to shop around. We have to ensure that there is an appropriate regulatory framework in place to govern how rates are set and how victims of accidents have recourse to justice if insurance companies are denying their benefits, if they are unable to get insurance, and if they are a victim in an accident.

So our concern on behalf of the NDP caucus is that this legislation goes nowhere near far enough to address those two concerns: fighting fraud and reducing premiums. We see that there are some modest initiatives that will take some baby steps toward reducing fraud, but the legislation, in fact, has a very negative impact on accident victims. It creates, now, a two-tier system, where people who want to seek recourse for insurance companies' decisions now have to go to a Licence Appeal Tribunal to argue their claim and they would have to go to the court to argue a no-fault suit. So it disadvantages accident victims in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex has two minutes to

respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Mississauga East-

Cooksville, Sarnia-Lambton and, of course, London West. Thank you so much for your input with regard to our point of view on Bill 171.

It was mentioned in some of the debriefs that it's a bad scenario when people who are unable to get insurance continue to drive without that insurance. I have some serious concerns about what can happen, especially when, as was pointed out by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, it's usually those bad drivers that hit you.

The comment was made earlier about State Farm: Why did they leave? I'm sure they have their reasons, although—

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, they sold off a portion of their business to Desjardins. I still love their motto, "You're in good hands with State Farm." I guess now this government has taken over that motto. I'm hearing someone else over there saying that you're in good hands.

Interjection: You're in safe hands.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Oh, you're saying "safe hands" now.

I look at the opportunities, and it's been mentioned in this House, to shop around. The former Attorney General and now minister without portfolio had commented that perhaps he and I could do a commercial for Grey Power or something of that nature. Of course, the NDP could do a commercial for that other insurance company that says, "15 minutes will save you 15%."

But we seriously need to protect victims and ensure that they get the proper financial reimbursement that is coming to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: As has been the focus of the debate this afternoon and throughout the duration of this bill, high auto insurance rates are a concern right across this province, whether it's people down south or people all across the north, especially in Kenora–Rainy River. The NDP has really prioritized this issue as a party. In fact, we incorporated it in our 2013 budget asks where we asked for a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates.

Now, the Liberals wouldn't come all the way. They wouldn't commit to implementing the 15% savings in one year. They've kind of drawn that out. What we've actually heard from people, what I've heard from people who have contacted my constituency offices, is that they've actually seen their rates increase. Now we're seeing bills like this, where it's virtually devoid of any cost-reducing measures for consumers. It does have some measures in place, as has been mentioned many times, to reduce costs on the part of auto insurance companies, but all consumers basically get is the flashy title of Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act.

In Kenora-Rainy River, as I said, affordable auto insurance rates are a top priority. In 2013, I sent out a budget survey where 90% of my constituents said that lower insurance premiums are a high or an extremely

high priority. In Kenora-Rainy River, as I mentioned earlier today, public transportation is virtually non-existent and people really do rely on their vehicles to get from point A to point B to access things like groceries, work and health care.

In fact, this past Friday, I participated in the provincial day of action against high hydro rates. Transit in the north, which in the north of course means road maintenance and affordable auto insurance rates, was a key theme. For people living in a place like Red Lake, where the protest was held, again, on hydro, it's very difficult to talk about any of the issues facing northerners without transit coming up, especially in the case of a place like Red Lake, which is 175 kilometres north of the Trans-Canada, where the only real accessible way in or out of the community is by road, because often a \$600 flight in and out of the community is just not practical for a lot of people. We don't have the luxury of public transit.

With the necessity of having a vehicle, that means vehicle payments, it means vehicle maintenance and of course it means gasoline, which is high enough in urban places that are along the TransCanada, like Dryden. It's even more expensive when you go to more remote communities like Red Lake, Sioux Lookout and in the far north

It also means auto insurance, which is mandated by the province. Because having auto insurance is required by law, I believe, as legislators, we have a duty and an obligation to make it affordable. There needs to be a balance between the consumer's ability to access this mandatory service at a fair and reasonable cost and the company's ability to cover its costs. There needs to be that fairness, there needs to be that balance. Presently, the scale has tipped away from this needed balance in favour of insurance companies. Many of us recall the changes that were made by this government in 2010 which resulted in increased premiums and slashed accident benefits, where the accident benefits were essentially halved.

I saw this firsthand because at the end of August 2010, I was involved in a head-on collision just outside my house. I've mentioned this before. I required and my partner required some significant non-OHIP-insured health care services, and at that time, there was a lot of emphasis placed by our health care providers on when exactly this accident occurred. It was very obvious to us that the type of accident benefits we would be entitled to—in fact, we were entitled to, because I believe we had the collision on August 26, 2010, versus if we had been involved in this collision on September 1, 2010.

Since that time, my constituency offices and the constituency offices of my predecessor have been flooded by people who are upset to see their benefits decreased and their premiums increased despite having no changes to their driving record. Then, of course, we later found out that these changes that were made in 2010 by this present government actually saved the auto insurance industry \$2 billion.

Now, at a time when we in the NDP have made it abundantly clear that these savings have not materialized,

that they have not been passed down to consumers, the Liberals have come forward with this bill that again only reflects the needs of the auto insurance industry.

We should really take a look at some of the measures that are included in this bill, and two that I want to focus on in particular. The first is that by denying accident victims access to the courts and replacing them with a tribunal, it removes fundamental rights as citizens. It increases appeals costs for consumers because under the new tribunal system, if an accident victim is successful in proving that the insurance company should have paid the claim benefit, the insurance company is forced to pay only a tiny fraction of the legal cost. This is a significant change from the court system and it really places the burden on the individuals who are already injured, even if they have a very strong case.

1710

Interjections.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would have expected a little more from members on the government side. There are a lot of riff-raff—a lot of discussion is going on on that side. This is a very serious issue for my constituents, and I would hope that they would pay attention.

The other thing is that if the accident victim is injured and it is someone else's fault, the victim now has to pay a lawyer to bring forward two entirely different cases in two entirely different systems: one in the court against the person who injured them, and this new arbitration against their insurance company, who denied them the benefits. Now, the accident victim will have huge extra legal costs and two different legal proceedings. None of these changes have anything to do with fighting fraud, but they have everything to do with making it easier for insurance companies to wrongfully deny benefits, delay settlements and make it harder for people to collect what they are rightfully owed.

The second point I want to address is that of prejudgment interest. This bill would change a 30-year-old rule that has been very important to those who have suffered injuries in Ontario. Prejudgment interest on pain and suffering damages is intended to compensate an innocent victim when the negligent person's insurance company delays paying those damages. It basically ensures timely payment for pain and suffering.

Currently, insurance companies are required to pay 5% interest on whatever a person is owed for pain and suffering. If a serious injury occurs and a person is owed \$50,000 for pain and suffering and the insurance company delays paying for three years, they have to pay \$7,500 in interest. That may not be a lot, but it's an incentive for the insurance company to deliver, to make these payments. By making these changes included in this bill, if these provisions are passed and the prejudgment interest rate is reduced to 1.3%, then the insurance companies stand to earn a 2.7% profit on the money of a person who is rightfully owed this money, for every year that they put off settling.

These amendments were introduced under the guise of fighting fraud and reducing automobile insurance rates

and they're presented as money-saving initiatives for insurers, but, clearly, the change in the interest rate has nothing to do with fighting fraud. In reality, this change is nothing more than another gift to Ontario's already profitable insurance sector, on top of the recent substantial cuts that have already netted insurance companies billions of dollars in profit.

In summary, there's a lot that needs to be done to restore the balance between a consumer's ability to access this mandatory service at a fair and reasonable cost and the company's ability to cover its cost—I want to stress that. It needs to be fair. No one is suggesting that insurance companies should be taking a loss, but it needs to be fair on both sides.

Aside from the flashy title of this bill, the bill completely misses the mark in restoring fairness to the auto insurance system and it clearly doesn't make this essential service affordable. I also question how effective it will be in cracking down on fraud as there is an obvious disconnect between the measures contained in this bill and eliminating auto insurance fraud.

I do think that we should maybe send this to committee. It will be an interesting experiment to see if it can be transformed into something meaningful. It will be interesting to see how much leeway the committee actually has to reform this bill, but, that being said, I look forward to making those changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm pleased to rise to speak regarding Bill 171, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014. We agree, as a government, to reduce auto insurance by 15%, and that is averaged over two years. We are well on our way toward achieving that goal; almost 5% has been reduced already since August 2013. Now we're taking steps to go even further by fighting fraud as well as reducing the overall costs of insurance. This is in order for it to directly benefit our Ontario drivers.

I know that this is very important to my community of Scarborough–Guildwood. Just this past weekend, I had an opportunity to speak with a father who was at a community centre with his two daughters. What he raised with me was the very high cost of insurance. I had an opportunity to share with him all that our government is doing to reduce the cost of insurance and to ensure that that is benefiting our drivers in Ontario. Of course, like my colleague who spoke before me, I advised that he contact his insurance company and ensure that he negotiates a better rate, because indeed rates are coming down, as we can see already with the 5% reduction that has been achieved since August.

But today, the legislation is speaking to how we can further transform the system in terms of the dispute resolution contacts and ensuring that disputes are settled faster, and also in terms of licensing and really professionalizing those that are providing health services to the system and ensuring that payments are received directly, that they get paid directly by the insurance

company, should they be licensed, as well as the time that vehicles are impounded. That is also a way to reduce the costs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments? The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Interiections.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's nice to see that the folks across the aisle are riled up about something today.

I did have a good chance to listen to the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I only have two minutes now, but I will be speaking to this later on this afternoon. She mentioned how she was in a car accident. I, too, unfortunately had a little fender-bender this past winter; the winter just seems to never end here. I was struck from behind on the QEW coming into Queen's Park one day. I figured I'd take this minute and 30 seconds just to share my personal experience.

It was a bit of an unfortunate morning. The lady behind me—we were all moving or getting out of the way to avoid an accident. I know she's all right. Her vehicle, of course, needed some repair, as did mine. But I want to thank my local insurance broker, Josslin Insurance—great guys. Just a quick phone call, seamless; they get you into the local body shop. Of course, I deal with Wendell Motors in Kitchener-Waterloo. Kevin Buckwald, he just takes care of me and it's seamless. So you know what? I've got to thank the insurance brokers in my community.

Of course, Kitchener–Waterloo is known for a significant insurance industry that employs thousands and thousands of people in our region, but more importantly, the commitment to our community—Manulife are obviously major contributors to our community, but also those insurance brokers who play a very key, key role in our community and provide an essential service to folks and are that conduit between policyholders and their insurance companies when mishaps like the member from Kenora–Rainy River had, as I did, this past winter—I'm happy to say that things are well.

But we do have a plan. I'm looking forward to outlining that plan that has been brought forward by my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex—Jeff Yurek; I guess I'll just say it. I'll share that with you in a matter of minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London-Fanshawe.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thank you to my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River for her debate notes. They were very informative, and I especially enjoyed listening to her examples in her riding.

Up north, as she mentioned before, people rely on transportation and it's not an option to take public transit. They are forced to drive their vehicles, because they need to get to work, they need to get to doctors' appointments or visit family or whatever the case may be. So they've got to pay what the insurance companies say.

Despite the fact that this bill—I mean, we're talking about the dispute resolution system and how it has

changed to two-tier. We on this side don't feel that that is a just way of dealing with the fraud issue, on an overview of how it's presented. But one thing that I do appreciate this bill does talk about is licensing medical rehabilitation facilities. That's something that I think was long overdue, because if you look at the reasons why insurance companies back in 2010 claimed that their costs were skyrocketing for running a business, it was because of accident benefits. Then they chopped those benefits down by half.

It would have been prudent at that time, if that was the reason, if they would have linked that to perhaps licensing the medical and rehab industry, because that's where things were coming through. People were staging accidents and saying they had whiplash or a sore back, and then they were getting prescriptions and medical treatment that they weren't really necessarily entitled to and suing on that basis, and that contributed to the fact that that particular sector of the insurance industry was contributing to that fraud. So at least that's in there.

I'm really interested to see, when this goes to committee, how those things will be picked over, and we'll get some really good feedback for the consultations that we'll be doing.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure, as always, for me to have the chance to stand and rise and speak to this particular bill, Bill 171, if memory serves me correctly. I am very proud to serve as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and I believe I spoke to this bill at the beginning of second reading.

This is something that's very important for our government as we continue to move very proactively with respect to our auto insurance rate reduction strategy—a strategy that, as other members have referenced on this side of the House, has been providing a great deal of progress for the people of Ontario. As those watching at home and those in the chamber would know, we promised in budget 2013 that we would, over the course of two years, be able to bring auto insurance rates down—on average, across the province—a total of 15%.

We have been working very closely with all of the different, very complicating, complicated and complex aspects of the auto insurance industry. We have taken into account the findings of the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force, and we have taken some very concrete steps.

The good news, as I said a second ago, is that the steps that we have taken are actually providing those results. It was referenced by the member from Scarborough—Guildwood just a moment ago that we have now seen—over the course of, relatively speaking, a small number of months—a 5% decrease, on average across Ontario, in auto insurance rates. That is directly as a result of the fact that our government has taken the initiative to make sure that we continue to deliver these kinds of positive results.

I think it is important that, while opposition parties, particularly members of the third party—and I was happy

to hear the member from Kenora–Rainy River say that she would like this bill to get passed at second reading and get to committee. That's heartening and encouraging to hear. I think that it is important for people watching at home to recognize that while other political parties spend an awful lot of time talking about what they believe is important, there is only one party, one government, in this chamber that is actually delivering the results as promised, and that's the Ontario Liberal government. I look forward to continuing to work on this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Sarah Campbell:** As I mentioned, affordable auto insurance rates are really a huge issue across this province. More needs to be done to strike a balance and make it affordable for people.

As I mentioned, people living in Kenora–Rainy River really don't have the luxury of public transportation. There are some very real and significant costs that are associated with driving our own vehicles, and people—in Kenora–Rainy River, especially—can't help but get resentful towards this government for not helping to ease their financial squeeze.

It's comments like those that are made by the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, where she kind of glibly counsels her constituents to just shop around, that really get people going in northwestern Ontario. We can shop around as much as we want, and we can find the best price, but you know what? That best price still isn't enough to make it affordable for people to get from point A to point B.

This is coming from a member who has the luxury of public transportation. Let me tell you, it really is a luxury, because there are people who, especially in the winter months, are completely stuck in their communities. There are concerns in places like Red Lake: How are we going to get the groceries to the community if we don't have access through our roads?

It's also a little frustrating and a little rich for that same member to be making those comments, that people can just shop around. This is coming from the government that has prioritized expanding what people in Kenora–Rainy River see as already excellent public transportation in the GTA. We don't have public transportation. To look at possibly going to the province cap in hand, saying that we're going to raise your taxes so you can fund transit down here, when we don't have that transit up here, is very, very frustrating.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm happy to rise today to speak on Bill 171, which we've been debating this afternoon, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. We've had a lot of discourse back and forth—certainly urban/rural differences that we just heard. The member from northern Ontario has expressed some issues that are certainly different than in urban Ontario. This bill does have some positive aspects—definitely areas that need to be improved, which is supported by the

reservations of some medical and rehabilitation professionals.

The Progressive Conservatives certainly understand that the purpose of the bill is to attempt to keep the Liberals' promise that they made last year, from their budget, to keep the NDP happy, that said that they would reduce auto insurance by a 15% premium reduction. I haven't seen the reduction myself, but, you know, they say it's working. Again, I don't know if many of the drivers out there would say that it is working, that they've seen a 15% reduction in their insurance premiums, but it certainly left it—a decision, like that of so many other businesses, the inability to reduce auto insurance rates.

One of the main insurance companies, as mentioned before, has decided to leave Canada. So there are over one million people out of work in Ontario, we've lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the past 10 years, and in the auto insurance, we've all heard about the loss of State Farm Insurance in Canada, which I was alluding to before. That held a significant 11% of the auto insurance market, and I'm sure you would all recognize their jingle: "Like a good neighbour, State Farm is there." I won't sing it, to save all the eardrums in the building. All I know for sure is that all of my neighbours are suffering from high insurance rates—I hear it all the time—and State Farm is no longer there because they can't afford to run their business in Ontario.

This is, unfortunately, just another notch in the Liberals' belt, another business, another company that's left, and jobs that have been lost in the province of Ontario. Among many problems, this company leaving our province means that there is one less company for Ontarians to choose from when buying auto insurance. It would mean paying higher rates than they currently are.

As the member from Caledon said, certainly the number one thing we hear about from all of our constituents is the hydro bills, struggling to pay their hydro bills, the increase in taxes that we've seen, even though the Liberal government promised a 15% reduction in auto insurance, which has yet to come to fruition, as I mentioned before.

Premiums in Ontario have actually climbed 17% since 2007. I mean, even Newfoundland was not even a close second and experienced increased insurance premiums at a total of 12% only.

Ontarians are suffering from high auto insurance rates, the threat of gas tax, high taxes, unemployment and rising debt, so how are the people of Ontario and the constituents, especially in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, expected to travel to work and around their communities? All these costs are building up upon them. It's certainly a lack of leadership. We've discussed insurance in committees—oh, my God—for years. There have been solutions out there I'm going to talk about a little later. I know I only have 10 minutes and the clock is ticking, but there have been solutions brought forward. The government has not shown leadership in acting on those solutions.

To make things worse, it is not Ontarians who are driving safely and abiding by the law who are being rewarded by this proposed 15% insurance reduction, but they did it so quickly to appease the third party here that they're actually proposing a 15% insurance reduction for those who have bad records. I know most people at home are saying, "What?" But I'm telling the truth. Recently, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario released the quarterly rate filings for auto insurance premiums, and one thing is clear: If you have multiple accidents or a drunk driving conviction on your record, you're going to get a premium reduction, they tell you.

The government has stated that the filings show premiums were down maybe 4% on average; however, the biggest reductions went to the non-standard insurers, and those are companies that act as an insurer of last resort for those drivers with multiple speeding tickets, accidents or drunk driving convictions. Their customers pay high premiums because they are the riskiest drivers on the road. So non-standard insurer Perth Insurance Co., under the direction of the regulator, filed for a premium reduction of 15%, the highest reduction of any company. The province's three other non-standard insurers—Pafco Insurance Co., Pembridge Insurance Co. and Echelon General Insurance Co.—filed for reductions of 14.5%, 12% and 18.7% respectively. My colleague and seatmate here, Jeff Yurek, the PC auto insurance critic, already stated last fall that Minister Sousa's premium reductions would disproportionately benefit bad drivers. I mean, really, could you get some policy right that makes sense. rewards the good drivers and doesn't reward the bad drivers?

1730

Yet again, I think it's pretty clear that the Liberals really don't have a good plan in action. The bill is more like casting a rod in the pond and, "We'll see if we get a bite." They got through the budget last year. I don't know what's going to happen with the budget this year, if the third party is going to support them or not, but we all wait with bated breath to see. Rather than following through on the promises that they made, they're just introducing this bill that we have today, that makes it sound as if they're taking action. Again, this halfmeasure will not achieve what the people of Ontario were promised, because everybody was saying, "Yes, I want a 15% reduction of my auto insurance." But did they really get it? My survey says, "Absolutely not." Maybe some of the bad drivers actually got something, as I stated, but not the drivers that should be credited with getting a reduction, that have the good records, or as a result of a better plan and actually working together to find a comprehensive plan to bring down auto insurance premiums for everyone, which the PC Party has put forward.

In the 2011 budget, the Liberals committed to reviewing the dispute resolution system that is available to insurance claimants, but despite the proposed review, mediation services will still conveniently remain an issue. In 2011, the Auditor General noted that mediation was a severe bottleneck that at the time had 30,000 cases

in backlog. It has come down now to about 16,000, but this backlog still delays settlements and adds costs and uncertainty to the system. I'm telling you, in committee, the stories would make you weep. We, as politicians setting policy, have to do something about that. The insurance system is not providing adequate, timely decisions for these people, and they are suffering. It takes 414 days to complete mediation. That's outrageous. How are people expected to wait around for this backlog to dissipate when they've suffered injuries in an accident that may cause them to go on disability or take a leave of absence from work? The backlog issue has not been properly addressed.

Again, my colleague Jeff Yurek has worked for over a year in consultation. We have a plan recommending the option for a claimant and insurer to use private mediators to get the backlog down. This gives them more choice to avoid these long queues. It's a publicly administered mediation process, but as I said before, those numbers are unacceptable, and people should not have to suffer the way they do while they're waiting, on the average—I think it was 414 days that I said.

Not only does our party want to use private mediators to reduce wait times, but we have also addressed the issue of why so many cases go to dispute in the first place. We recommend using existing medical assessment guidelines to have truly independent third-party assessments that would make injury classifications more black and white and eliminate the need for mediation in some cases.

The number one thing of the rising cost of insurance is fraud. How do we change that? Again, they've had a fraud task force. The reports have been presented to the Liberal government. There has been no leadership in making the changes. In Bill 171, they try to address some of the issues—to issue licences for health care providers that provide services to auto accident victims. It's an attempt to reduce fraudulent practice in health clinics that overbill insurers or bill for unperformed services, but as I said, the bill is really not enough. Fraud is estimated to cost the system between \$750 million and \$1.5 billion. That's just enormous. The Liberals, obviously, don'totherwise, they would be taking greater action to address the issue. They don't believe it's costing the system that much. The anti-fraud task force report that I mentioned before, released in 2012—we're now in 2014—included 38 recommendations. This bill only addresses four of those recommendations.

Again, we need stronger legislation to provide an insurance system that's affordable and effective. There are lots of reports out there. We've had lots of committees. We need to make a difference in the auto insurance sector.

My time is just about up. I was pleased to speak for a short time this afternoon on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

**Hon. Mario Sergio:** I've been listening very attentively to the remarks by the member from Haliburton—

Kawartha Lakes–Brock. This is second reading. We've been debating this for quite some time now. What I've heard is that this is not 100% acceptable to the members. The reason why we are debating the bill here today is to send it on to the committee, where they will be debating it more. Then they will be hearing other stakeholders as well, and bringing it back, hopefully, as a much better bill

The fact is that in the last year, as a government, we have approved a 15% reduction. This is already taking place. Next year it will be completed—the full 15%. We know rates are coming down—rates are coming down. I speak for my constituents as well, because they are working-class people and I know what it means to them. The fact is that by debating it and not sending it forward to bring it back improved, if you will, nothing is going to happen.

We know that we have to go after the fraud that exists within the system. We know that we have to license the health care providers, because it's an issue, as the members well know. We know that long storage is expensive. Again, this all adds to the various expenses that the insurance companies have to pay.

The bill is good. It may not be 100% acceptable, but I would say—you know what? Let's take it from here. Let's bring it back. Let's make it better. And let's do it as quickly as possible so we can send a message to the insurance companies and we can send a message to our people, because this is a good bill. It's going to help. Let's do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The next person—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened very carefully and attentively to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock as she spoke on this bill here today. One of the things she hit on—and I think it is the most important issue—is the fraud in the insurance industry.

This has been something that has been a problem for not weeks, not months, not years, but decades. Fraud and insurance: They've kind of been hand in glove for an awfully long time. I'm supportive of any attempt to try to reduce, with the hope of eventually—I don't think we'll ever eliminate fraud in the insurance business; we won't eliminate fraud in banking or anything else, either. But we've got to take the necessary steps to try to reduce that kind of fraud, because when there is a fraudulent claim made, it doesn't cost the criminals; it costs the honest people out there who work hard every day in a workforce here in Ontario. It's getting harder to find a job, certainly in manufacturing. But they work hard every day to pay the bills. When there is fraud going on in the insurance industry, they pay.

One of the things that we're concerned about in this bill is that in an inequitable way, it actually rewards bad drivers.

Mr. Michael Harris: Drunk drivers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga says, drunk drivers. Well, they're bad drivers. If you're a drunk driver, you're a bad driver.

If you're getting rewarded by this bill for misbehaviour, I have a bit of a problem with that. Well, I don't have a bit of a problem; I have a real problem with that.

Let's see if we can get this thing ironed out, straightened out, fix the kinks, fix the problems. But at the end of the day, if we can reduce fraud in the insurance business, it is going to succeed in reducing the rates of every honest driver out there, and that will be a benefit to us all.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Kenora-Rainy River for her comments. They were well taken.

I really laugh when I hear people stand up and say, "Oh, they're going to reduce your rates. They're going to do this and they're going to do that." In 45 years, I've never had a rebate from an insurance company, and I have a clean record. When is that going to happen? I'll wait and see.

The bottom line is, you have to look at what's really going on here. What's going on is, if an insurance company—for example, the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville said shop around. Well, I've got news for her. I just renewed my insurance. No claims, same cars—everything is the same. I went from one company and they raised it a considerable amount. I was a little concerned so I did phone another company. There was an \$1,100 difference, and I even got better coverage. But what the insurance companies do is that they'll offer you a good rate, and then you go with them, and then a year later it starts to go up again. In two years, you're right back where you started from.

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Speaker, with all due respect, you can talk about, "This is going to really work, and this is going to reduce rates." You know what? I'll believe it when the cheque's in the mail and I get my rebate. Then I'll believe it, and so will the other people in Ontario. It's never happened.

When insurance companies leave this province, do you know why they are leaving, Speaker? Because they're not making enough money. They're not making 150%; they are only making 75%. So they are going to go somewhere else where they can make the 150%. That's why State Farm left Ontario: because they weren't making enough. So where do you draw the line?

You know, the member from the north is saying, oh, yes, shop around. In a city or a town of 10,000 people where they've got nowhere to go and they don't have public transit, let's shop around for better rates. Give me a break, Speaker. Give me a break.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Minister without portfolio.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. Here we have another bill that everybody in the House seems to agree on. We had another bill like that this morning. I think it was the family leave act. This bill has had eight or nine hours of debate now, and yet we can't seem to bring it to a vote. So once again I want to tell the people of Ontario what is really happening here.

You have the opposition party over there, and they are here to oppose government. I've been over there; I know how it works. You basically don't want to agree with anything that happens on this side, even though you like

You've got the third party that agrees with this bill, but they don't believe in the one issue that would really deal with these bills in a quick and expedient fashion to get them to second reading and get them to committee and to third reading. What's that, Speaker? We need a programming motion, a time allocation motion. It doesn't matter what you call it, Speaker, but they don't support time allocation.

I'm all in favour of the open debate that we have in this Legislature. It's one of the real democratic rights that we have as Canadians, and I'm very proud of our parliamentary system. But the reality is, even though we all agree on this bill, in a minority government, unfortunately, these bills cannot come to a vote until ultimately some sort of a deal is worked out. The people out there in television land must be thinking, "How is it possible that these people agree on these bills and yet it takes"—there was a bill, the Local Food Act, that I think was given 25 hours of debate, on a bill that we all agreed on.

Let's get on with it. Let's call the vote on this bill. Let's move it to second reading. Let's get it done.

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You know I've hit a nerve when you hear the yelling and screaming over there. They know what I'm telling is the truth. Let's get on with

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister responsible for seniors, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, and of course the latest speaker, the minister without portfolio. He says he'd like to get on with it. Well, you know, back to the half measures in the bills that this government brings forward: The Local Food Act? Talk about a toothless measure. We had to put some teeth into it when it got to committee finally.

This is only four recommendations of how many that were recommended by the anti-fraud task force? So really, we've set out a list of recommendations we'd like to see with auto insurance. We've asked them to steal any of our ideas. We have lots of white papers out there. We say the four pillars to change for auto insurance are the following.

Reduce excess bureaucracy: This Liberal government loves bureaucracy, so that is going to be hard for them to accept, probably, but it is what is needed.

Combat fraud: How many discussions do we have to have about fraud? It exists. It's causing our rates to go up, and you haven't done anything about it in two and a half years.

The dispute resolution process: I named all the stats and the backlog and the mediation days—414. You should be embarrassed that you're running a government the way you run it.

Of course, our all-time favourite pillar of insurance reform: Increase accountability. That's a foreign topic over there on the Liberal side, increasing accountability.

They, again, bring in lots of bills that have—I don't know. What are you up to: 37 panels now for more discussions on accountability? Why don't you actually do something responsible for the people of the province of Ontario? We're talking about reform in the auto insurance industry. If you can't get that right—I agree with my colleague from Simcoe—Grey—just resign. Step down. Call the election.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, point of order. The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I'm sure that it's 6 of the clock somewhere in eastern Ontario right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I've been listening to the debate all afternoon and I felt that it was important to get my 10 minutes on the record here today on behalf of my constituents who I represent in Kitchener—Conestoga.

As I had mentioned before, the insurance industry in my region of Waterloo is quite significant. In fact, a lot of the major insurers call Kitchener-Waterloo home. I could list them all, but I know I only have 10 minutes and I know the members across here obviously want to hear what we have to say.

As we head into another provincial budget, which I believe is coming May 1, there really is one thing that will be on the mind of NDP leader Andrea Horwath, other than actually trying to make a decision as to what she'll do this time to prop up a scandal-plagued government; it will be, really, the auto insurance 15% that they so-called "got" in the last budget. This was a topic of debate last year during that budget deliberation.

The Liberal government has timely introduced Bill 171, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, to make sure that they will try to fulfill their 2013 budget promise to the NDP, which kept them in office another year.

Bill 171 was introduced on March 4, with urgency to pass before our 2014 budget. This time, there is more support from the insurance industry and brokers. Lawyers for both insurers and claimants support the majority of the bill but have some reservations, as do medical and rehabilitation professionals. But overall, this bill moves us relatively in the right direction. If there's one thing that we can all agree on in this House, it's that in fact auto insurance rates are high and that Ontario needs to change.

I will say to you that I just recently switched insurance companies. I got my auto insurance premiums down. I'm quite happy with my insurance company, so I don't quite have the concerns of other folks, but today I will speak up on behalf of those who do.

Under the current government, Ontario has far exceeded other Canadian provinces like Alberta, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and even Nova Scotia. Premiums have taken a spike of 17% since 2007, really because of a number of regulatory decisions made by the government. This puts an added strain on household budgets and families who already feel the pressures of high taxes, unemployment and rising debt.

Last year, the NDP proposed a rigid 15% off auto insurance rates to bring costs down. We have all heard that this is not really an effective way to reduce auto insurance rates. In fact, it is unsustainable. That's why the PCs have put forward a plan that is both effective and sustainable and will bring down premiums for everyone.

With the great work by my colleague the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, we have established four key pillars of reform. He has gone through in-depth consultations with drivers and experts from the legal, insurance—like those representing the Insurance Bureau of Canada—and medical communities. We would help eliminate red tape—crucial. We would fight the insurance fraud.

You know what? I had a great meeting in my office earlier on when this issue became more timely in the House, with Ralph from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. He was telling me how either he or a relative of his was at an intersection and making a left-hand turn. Obviously, there were a couple of oncoming vehicles this way and they waved him on to make the turn. It was a green light. He—or whoever he was telling the story of—went and made a left-hand turn, and of course the vehicle then proceeded to drive into him, or the one behind. I mean, this is clearly a scam, and this is where the fraud starts. It's an orchestrated—

Hon. John Gerretsen: You can't say that in here.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** I'm talking about a story that is real, and you should have heard the first part of it; I'll let you read Hansard tomorrow.

Anyways, I was talking about insurance fraud, and this incident: turning left into a parking lot, vehicles from behind coming in and hitting you—well, you're turning into somebody else's lane. All of a sudden, tow trucks show up. They tow your car off to some garage, and the gentleman in the vehicle perhaps has to go get a lot of health work done to him etc. The bills rack up, insurance companies have to pay for this, and this is where the fraud starts.

I've actually been talking to people in my community, and I've said to them—I heard about an accident. One of them was explaining, and she actually told the story of how this happened to her. I caution drivers when they're on our roads today: If they're making a left-hand turn and somebody waves them on, that is a likely sign that insurance fraud is about to commence.

to customers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not if you're in Renfrew county—

Mr. Michael Harris: In Renfrew county, they—Hon. John Gerretsen: Not in Barry's Bay.

Mr. Michael Harris: Anyways, it happens elsewhere in Ontario, and we have to look out for this, because this is what happens: You're innocently waved on, the driver turns in and smacks it up, and the bills just come flowing in. That's just my quick insurance fraud story, and I'm sure we can come back to that, but I encourage drivers out there to just forget about the guy in the car. Tell him

Back to my plan. I talked about those four key pillars. I talked about the fact that we wanted to eliminate red tape. I just touched on fighting insurance fraud. We talked about making the dispute resolution process more effective and ensuring that auto insurers are accountable

to come on and pull in, and everything will be good—

because, at the end of the day, you'll be at fault.

I want to outline, in the last three minutes that I have, those four pillars that my colleague from Elgin-Middle-sex-London outlined. This is the PC auto insurance action plan:

(1) Encourage competition and reduce excess bureaucracy. We'll do this by adopting a file-and-use rate-setting process to allow companies to lower prices quicker, ensure greater market competitiveness and encourage a wider range of discount offerings for Ontario drivers.

(2) We'll reform the dispute resolution process so that, in the event of a claims dispute, people could opt for private mediations in order to reduce wait times and costs associated with government-appointed mediators—a novel idea. We would also establish a true independent, peer-reviewed medical assessment system by standardizing assessment procedures and requiring multiple assessments to be performed by medical professionals of the same specialization.

(3) This is an important one. It may not happen in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, but it will perhaps happen in other jurisdictions, and that is to combat fraud. We will establish a special unit in the crown attorney's office—

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** We're already doing that. We're doing that.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** Now, the former Attorney General is here, actually, so I'm glad he's listening to this. Now he's a minister without a portfolio; I think he's still got one under the desk, but anyways.

We're going to establish a special unit in the crown attorney's office to investigate and prosecute fraud—an action that has proven successful in places like New

Jersey and Britain.

We're going to use the Health Claims for Auto Insurance system—an electronic billing system for health care clinics—to help identify abnormal billing patterns. We would advocate for the implementation of the recommendations from the anti-fraud task force report back in November 2012.

(4) We're going to increase accountability. We're going to do this by ensuring a fair, well-functioning

marketplace for auto insurance by making senior insurer executives personally and financially liable for the conduct of their company.

I know I've got a minute and 20 left. I'll just highlight those four bold PC auto insurance action plan items: We're going to encourage competition and reduce excess bureaucracy, we're going to reform the dispute resolution process, we're going to combat fraud and we're going to increase accountability—four easy things that we will put forward. I'm thankful to my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for bringing forward those items.

I'm happy, though, that the Liberals have taken sections of our action plan and used them as a resource when drafting Bill 171 as part of their cost-reduction strategy, instead of really mandating a 15% reduction. Taking a unilateral cut would have created several unintended and negative consequences that, earlier, my colleague from Nipissing-Pembroke etc. talked about—them actually giving reductions to bad drivers. We have heard in this House a question that my colleague has put forward, highlighting just that, where we're actually giving drivers who have been convicted with impaired driving convictions an auto insurance reduction. That just doesn't make sense. We have got to get this right—follow the four steps.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the time today. Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

### ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### **HYDRO RATES**

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with an answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy. He will have up to five minutes to debate the matter.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. To the government member opposite, a local couple with a 790-square-foot home received an electricity bill in February of \$641—\$234 was a delivery charge, so they have some questions.

I asked the Minister of Energy last week, why is their heating bill so high? Is it delivery—the cost of transmission? We know that locally, at Caledonia, the new power towers marching in from Niagara have yet to be strung with wires because of threats from native militants. They have now been standing wireless for eight years.

Is it the cost of regulation and the lack of competition? With prices being set by government decree through long-term high-priced contracts, we raise that question.

Is it generation? OPG is still plagued with cost overruns. Both OPG and Hydro One suffer from high labour costs and top executives have the highest salaries in the public sector. As opposition, we propose opening both OPG and Hydro One to competition.

Is it the cost of fuel? There is nothing cheaper than coal, or water power for that matter. The coal plants closed just before this hard winter, and oversupply from wind leads to spilling water over dams, wasting nuclear power or selling electricity over the border at a loss. Our gigantic Nanticoke generating station—it's the largest of its kind; it's a billion-dollar asset—sits empty. The pipeline has received environmental approval. We ask why not run natural gas and biomass through Nanticoke? Is it because there is no demand for electricity because of the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs?

Is it your government's Green Energy Act? Your act fosters subsidized, inefficient wind and solar, producing power often when we don't need it. At other times, it's not dependable—again, only when the wind blows or the sun shines. We can't create a sustainable, renewable industry by forcing consumers to pay excessive prices.

We feel Ontario needs to get back on track. We could make great gains. For starters, scrap the Green Energy Act. That's something we will do. Implement a moratorium on wind turbines until the jury is in on the health and environmental studies. We will not sign any more expensive FIT contracts and we'll take a hard look at the existing ones.

So why are people having trouble paying their bills? Is it your debt retirement charge? Is that not paid off, or are you dipping further into the cookie jar, borrowing more, using it as some kind of a slush fund? The budget-leaking team, the BLT, has an April 23 date for an announcement to keep this debt retirement charge on bills until 2016. What is that all about? Why is this stranded debt such a moving target? With respect to the debt retirement charge, I received a tweet from Gord Drimmie asking @Bob_Chiarelli "May we please have gas plant cancellation costs listed as a separate line item on our electricity bill?"

Is it your government's HST? The list goes on. Is it because of the cancelling of the natural gas generating stations by your government? We in this Legislature have seen the domination of questions with respect to that \$1.1-billion cost. Was it to buy votes? By the intentional destruction of email evidence—again by your government—by a Liberal-employed computer hacker, Peter Faist, hired illegally to wipe clean computers in the Premier's office. Is it mismanagement? Is it lack of a plan?

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I will point out that we have a plan; it's titled Paths to Prosperity: Affordable Energy. With our policy, our plan, once we're given office and a chance to manage this file, we can guarantee cheaper rates under a Hudak government than under the Liberals. When we were in government, our rates were 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. You charge 12.4 at peak. Why is that?

It goes against basic economics. The demand has gone down; your price has gone up.

I ask again: Why the high prices? Is it OPG cost overruns, Hydro One inefficiencies, high salaries? Is it the cost of smart meters, the cost of the smart grid?

You've doubled the rates since your government has been in power. You're slated to jump rates another 46% in the next two years.

What do I tell this couple heating a very small home? They cannot afford to heat that house.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I would like to acknowledge the co-operation of my colleague across last week when I was not available to do the late show. I much appreciate his rescheduling the late show with me.

The question actually relates to a World Trade Organization decision which has to do with domestic content requirements in Ontario clean energy agreements. The short answer to his question is that Canada, the European Union and Japan reached an agreement on an implementation period of 10 months to implement a World Trade Organization ruling, to bring Ontario's Feed-In-Tariff program into compliance with that World Trade Organization decision.

What does this mean? It means the deletion of one line in the bill. A lot of the rest of this has been an interesting set of largely unfounded allegations. Let's just go through some of the things that the member asked about and talk about a few of the things he may have missed.

Through Ontario's Green Energy Act, some 31,000 good, high-paying manufacturing jobs have been created here in the province of Ontario, through investments in renewable energy and conservation as well as the smart grid, energy technology and transmission and distribution upgrades.

It's worth pointing out that 11 years ago, when our government had the privilege and responsibility of assuming the reins in this province, Ontario was a net buyer of electricity. Today we are a net seller. Today Ontario earns some—last year, it was \$350 million in export of electricity to jurisdictions surrounding us. The year before, I believe it was \$500 million. Our electricity generation is in fact contributing to keep down the price of energy.

The member mentioned the debt retirement charge. I really can't help but pick up on that one. I would refer listeners to the Auditor General's website; that's auditor.on.ca. You've got to go back a little bit. This would be the 2010 Auditor General's report. If my memory serves me correctly, it's somewhere around page 23 that you'll find the Auditor General talking about the reduction of the debt retirement charge. The Auditor General will point out that, following the attempted sale of the former Ontario Hydro, offloaded on the taxpayer was a great deal of long-term debt incurred in building a lot of the energy assets that Ontario still has and that are still in use. The Auditor General says, in part, that initially there was very little progress in paying this amount down, and then goes into the years in which our

government has been in office and points out that since the government took office, that amount has been steadily reduced. How much was that? According to the Auditor General, that was \$20.6 billion.

This government believes in addressing debt the old-fashioned way: We pay it down. That debt will be off the government's books in the next few years. I'm not certain of the exact date, but it is a legacy debt inherited from when the member opposite's party was in government. When in government, they cranked up the burning of coal by about 25%. To that end, I would specifically ask people who live in the GTA, when was the last time that you remember a smog alert day? I think

there were two or three last summer. If memory serves me correctly, either the summer previous or the summer before that, there were none. So instead of a few smog alert days a week because of the airshed being contaminated with burning coal to generate electricity at peak times in the summer, today we are no longer burning coal to generate electricity in the province of Ontario. People have a modern grid, people have clean air, and that is what Ontarians want their electricity system to be: sustainable, affordable and reliable.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will adjourn now until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1806.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-	
	Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London-Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	Deputy Speaker, The president
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough Sud-Ouest	-
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti
	James	reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du
G LUG LOTON	V D' D'	gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tanaian Cultura and Sanat / Minister da Tanaiana da la
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Marknam-Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
		Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Game.  / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	- Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	NO. 1. C. II
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	5
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities /
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)		Autres responsabilités Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Corresponding to month of the (E1D)	les Îles	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North /	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du
Gravency from / E nom member (E1D)	Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and	
	Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
		Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment /
		Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
	Ouest-Glanbrook	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
, ,	Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et de Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernemen

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
		Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Withfact Without Fortiono / Withfact Sans porteredire
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de
Sousa, Home E Hom Charles (EID)	mississaaga Douari mississaaga Daa	gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Tamber of Filmore des Filmores
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	ometene
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	0 0	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
		Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Locality of Official of Cher du Faire insertal de l'Official o
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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## STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

## Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue

Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak

Laura Albanese, Steve Clark Mike Colle, Joe Dickson Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette

Michael Prue

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

### Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue

Soo Wong

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

### Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield

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Jeff Yurek

Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

## Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Lisa M. Thompson

Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

## Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Jonah Schein

Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

## Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod

Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha Todd Smith

odd Smith

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Soo Wong

Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Bill Walker

Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

## Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Paul Miller

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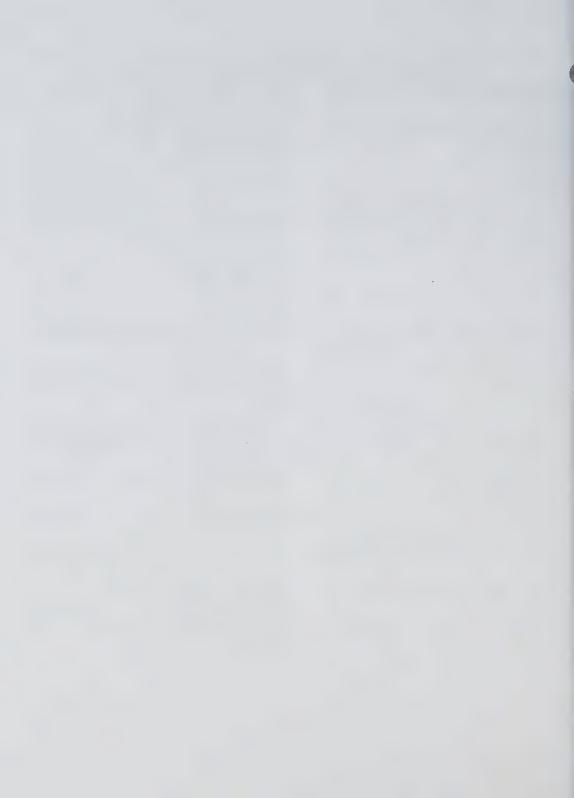
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Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott

Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor

Soo Wong

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day





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